Lililicious~may its fragrance encompass you

ピエタ
pietà
I
榛野なな恵

A Lilicious project
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Edited by: kaba

# ピエタ

—pietà

Pieta

by Haruno Nanane

榛野なな恵

Let's sit on the beach
and wait for the dawn

Let's see the moment when time begins
to flow in space

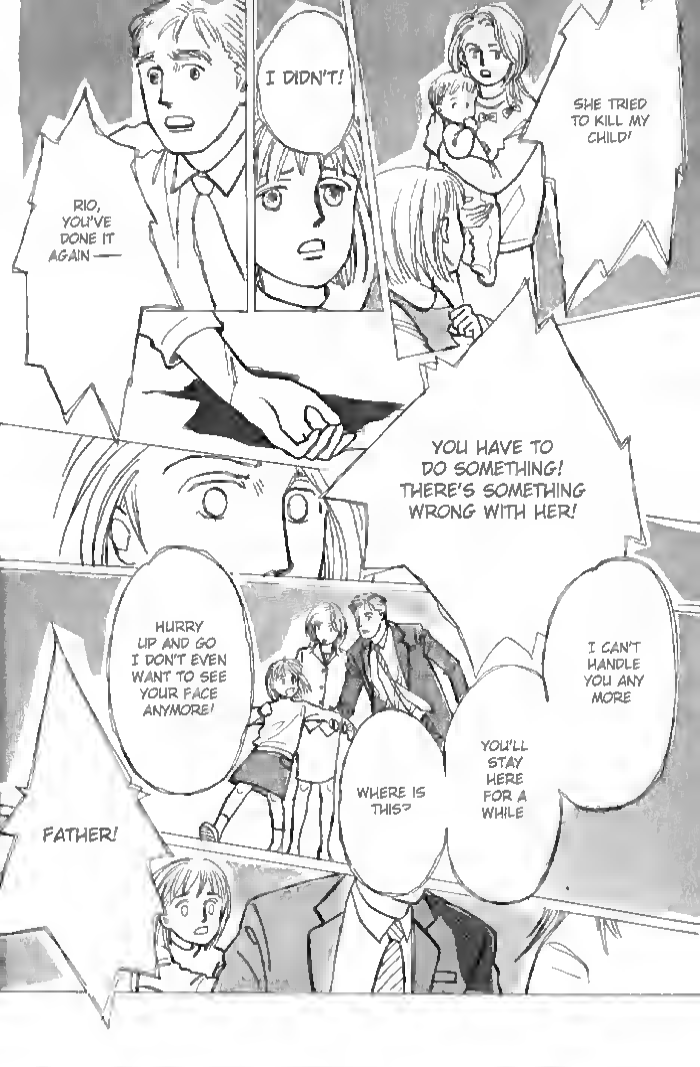
We'll link our hands
and never let go,

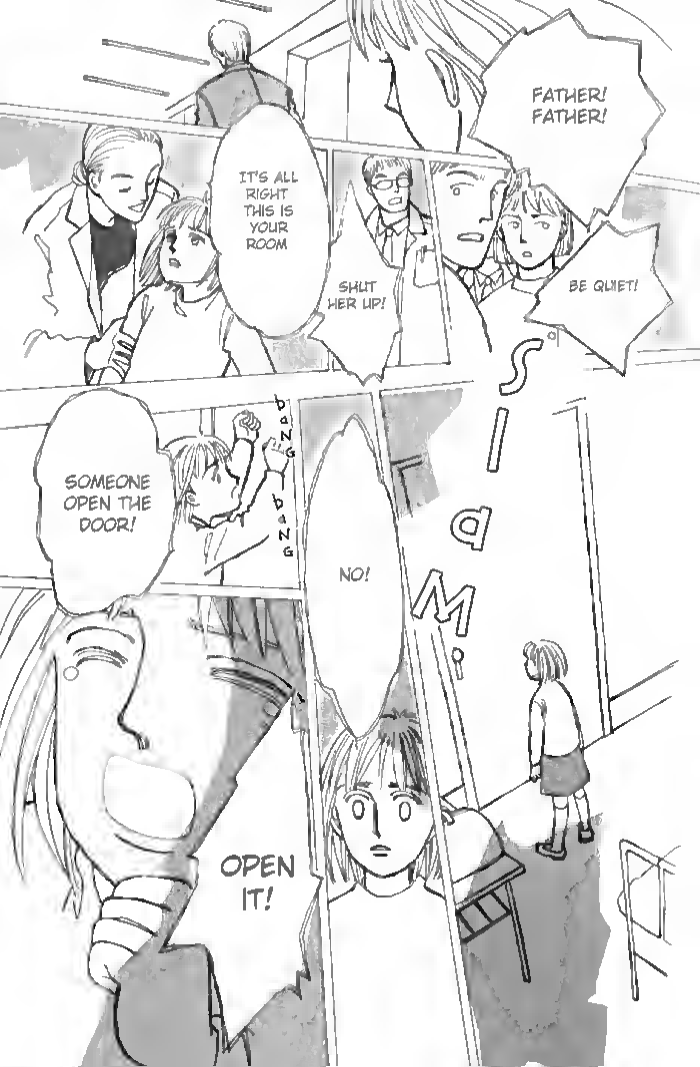
Nodding at the tender premonition

ピエタ
pieta
#1
Haruno Nanane

NN...

I SAW IT!
I SAW IT!
THIS GIRL JUST——
IT WAS HER!


RIO, YOU'VE DONE IT AGAIN——
I DIDN'T!
SHE TRIED TO KILL MY CHILD!
YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING! THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH HER!
HURRY UP AND GO I DON'T EVEN WANT TO SEE YOUR FACE ANYMORE!
I CAN'T HANDLE YOU ANY MORE
FATHER!
WHERE IS THIS?
YOU'LL STAY HERE FOR A WHILE


FATHER! FATHER!
BE QUIET!
IT'S ALL RIGHT THIS IS YOUR ROOM
SHUT HER UP!
SLAM!
SOMEONE OPEN THE DOOR!
bang bang bang
NO!
OPEN IT!

SOMEONE LET ME OUT OF HERE!

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TRANSLATED BY: SAILOR AVALON
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LILILICIOUS - MAY IT'S FRAGRANCE ENCOMPASS YOU
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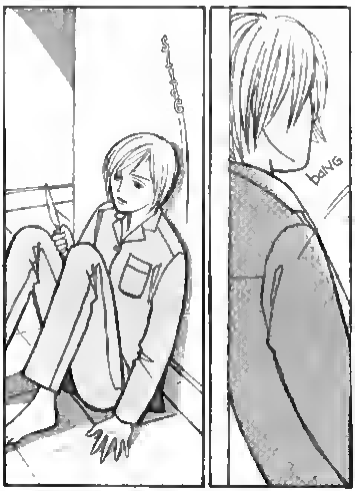
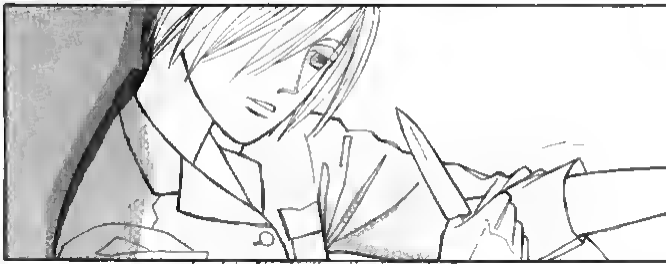
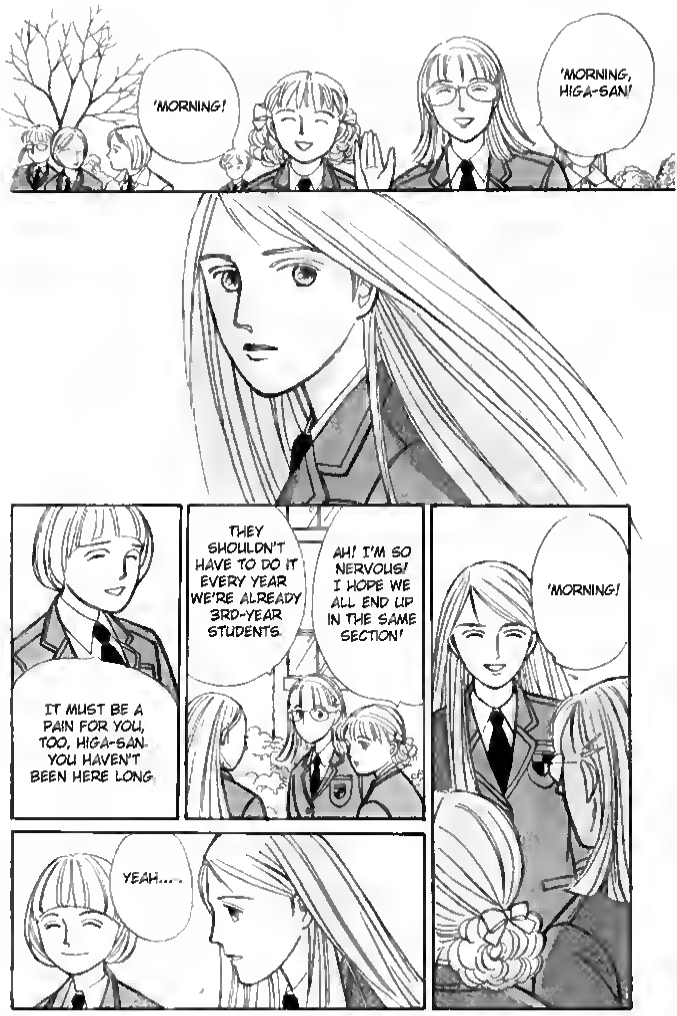

bang



DRIP
STAB
hee

HELP.

SOMEONE
SOMEONE


'MORNING!
'MORNING, HIGA-SAN!
'MORNING!
AH! I'M SO NERVOUS! I HOPE WE ALL END UP IN THE SAME SECTION!
THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE TO DO IT EVERY YEAR WE'RE ALREADY 3RD-YEAR STUDENTS.
IT MUST BE A PAIN FOR YOU, TOO, HIGA-SAN. YOU HAVEN'T BEEN HERE LONG.
YEAH....

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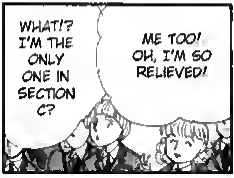
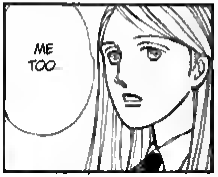
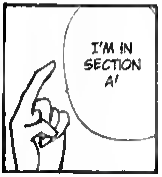
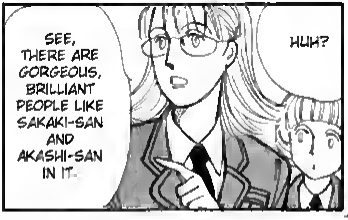
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "ANYWAY?"
BUT SINCE THERE ARE A LOT OF DIFFERENT COURSES, IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER WHAT SECTION YOU'RE IN. AND WE'RE ALL IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL ANYWAY.

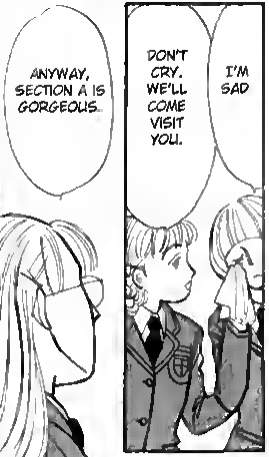
A
B
C

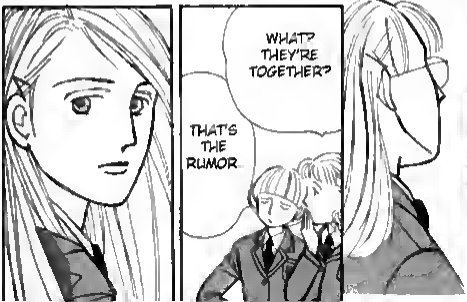

WHAT!? I'M THE ONLY ONE IN SECTION C?
ME TOO! OH, I'M SO RELIEVED!

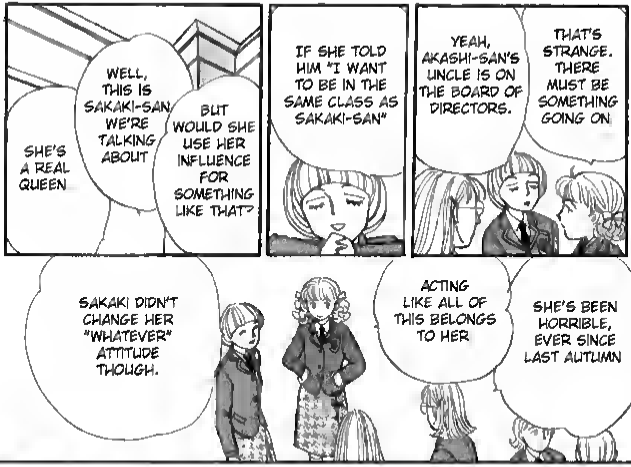

ME TOO.

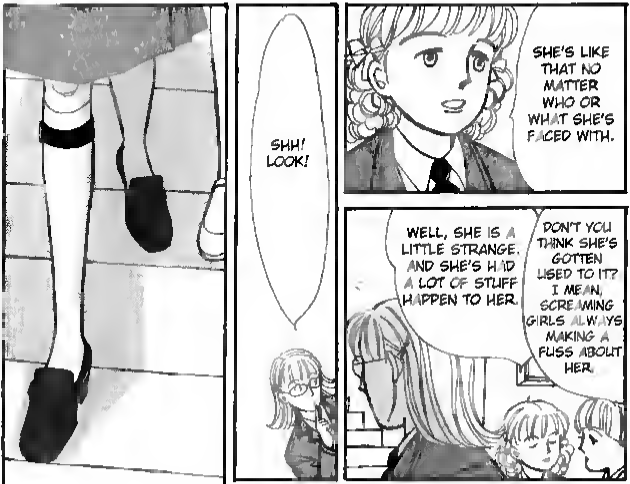

I'M IN SECTION A!

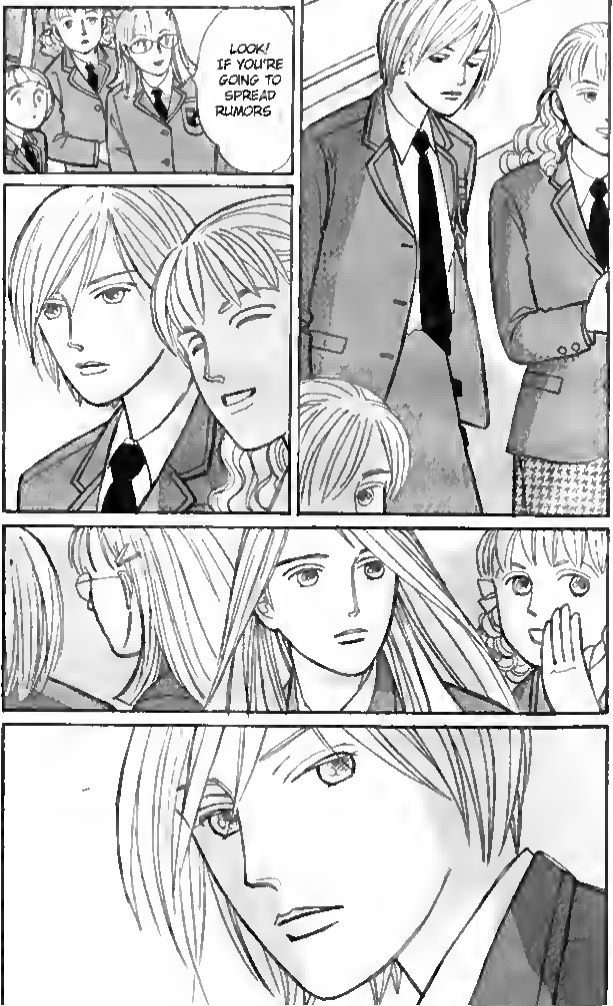

SEE, THERE ARE GORGEOUS, BRILLIANT PEOPLE LIKE SAKAKI-SAN AND AKASHI-SAN IN IT.
HUH?

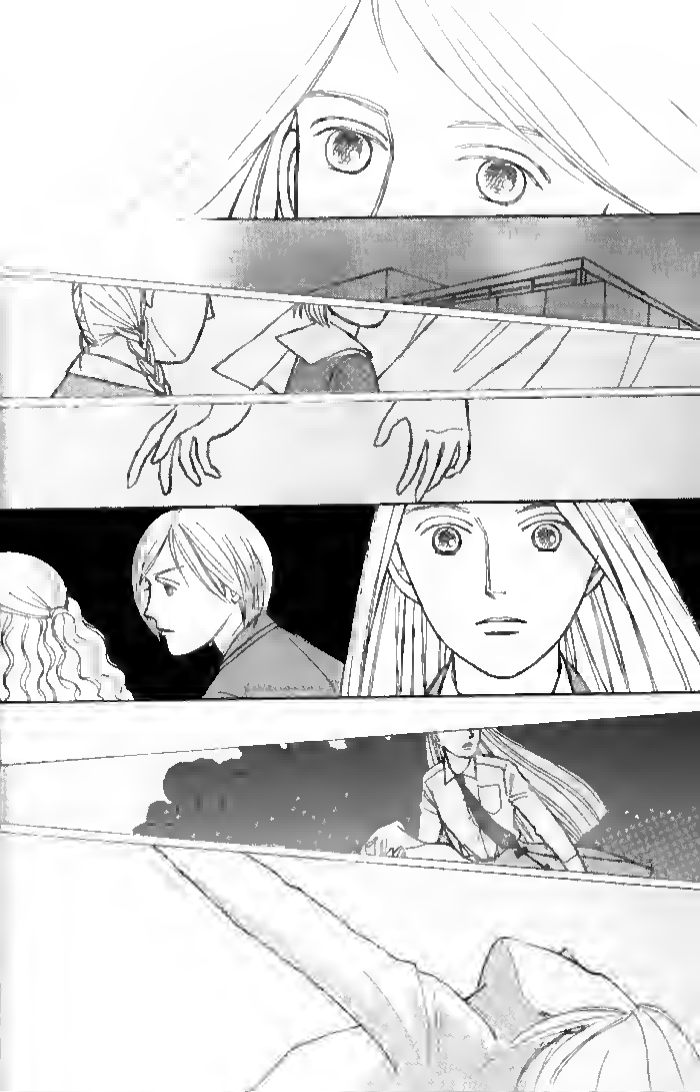

ANYWAY, SECTION A IS GORGEOUS.
I'M SAD
DON'T CRY. WE'LL COME VISIT YOU.


WHAT? THEY'RE TOGETHER?
THAT'S THE RUMOR.

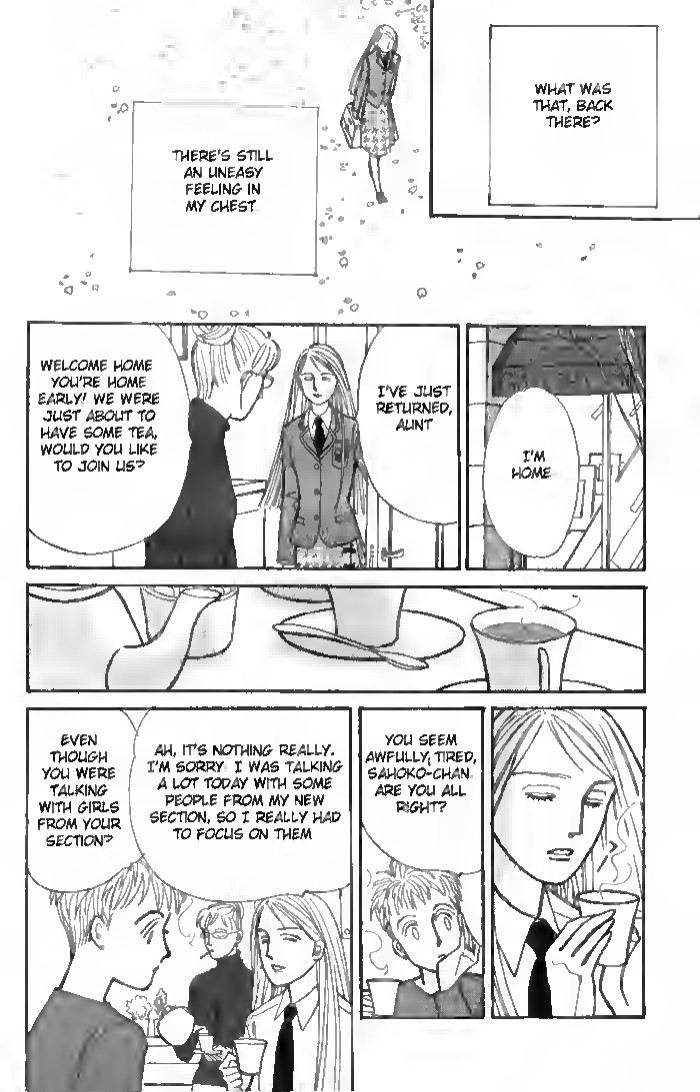

SHE'S A REAL QUEEN
WELL, THIS IS SAKAKI-SAN WE'RE TALKING ABOUT
BUT WOULD SHE USE HER INFLUENCE FOR SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
IF SHE TOLD HIM "I WANT TO BE IN THE SAME CLASS AS SAKAKI-SAN"
YEAH, AKASHI-SAN'S UNCLE IS ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.
THAT'S STRANGE. THERE MUST BE SOMETHING GOING ON.
SAKAKI DIDN'T CHANGE HER "WHATEVER" ATTITUDE THOUGH.
ACTING LIKE ALL OF THIS BELONGS TO HER
SHE'S BEEN HORRIBLE, EVER SINCE LAST AUTUMN

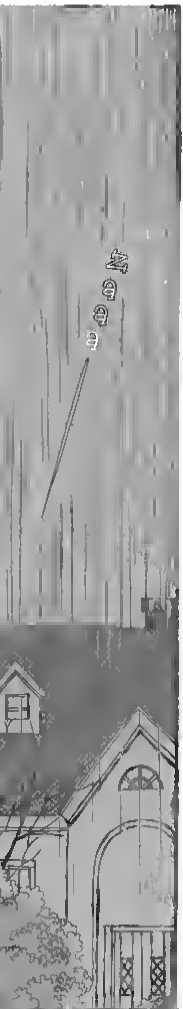

SHH! LOOK!
SHE'S LIKE THAT NO MATTER WHO OR WHAT SHE'S FACED WITH.
WELL, SHE IS A LITTLE STRANGE. AND SHE'S HAD A LOT OF STUFF HAPPEN TO HER.
DON'T YOU THINK SHE'S GOTTEN USED TO IT? I MEAN, SCREAMING GIRLS ALWAYS MAKING A FUSS ABOUT HER.

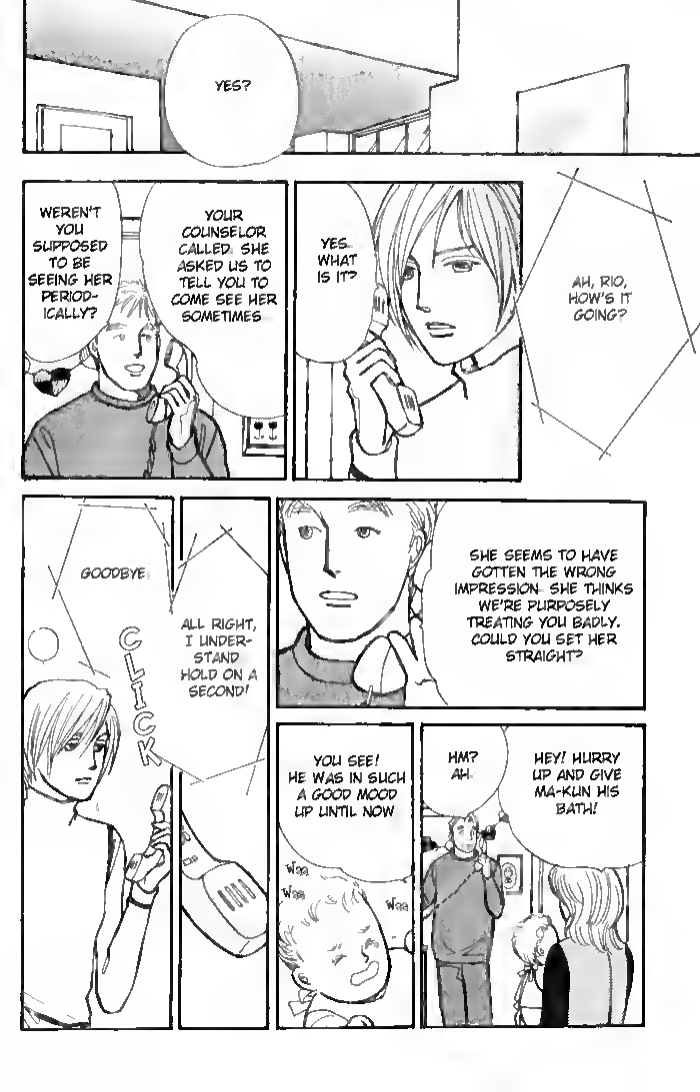

LOOK! IF YOU'RE GOING TO SPREAD RUMORS

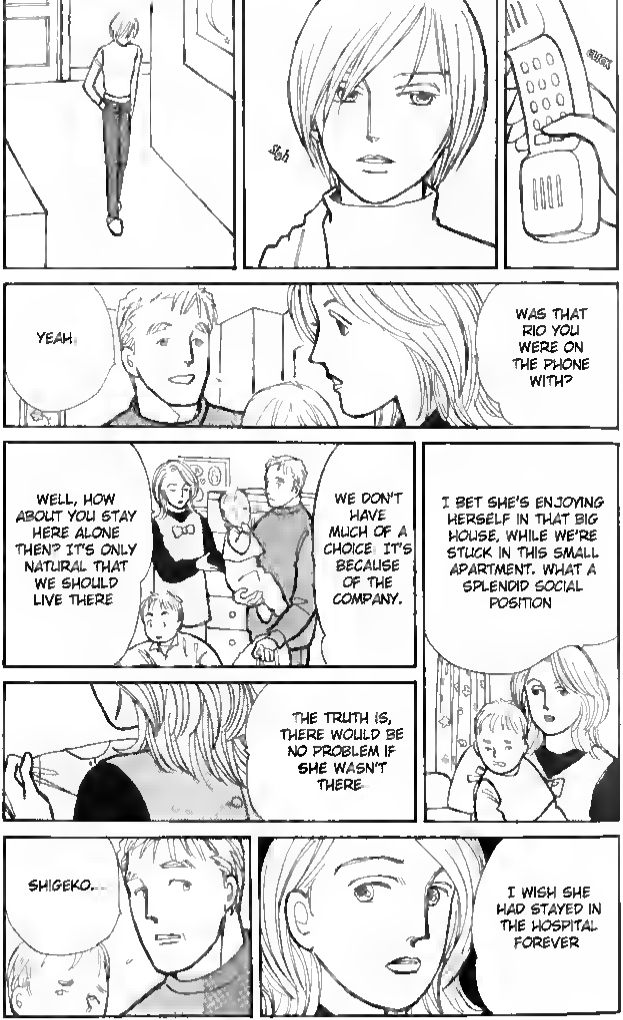


WHAT'S WRONG, HIGA-SAN?
WHAT? UH ...
NOTHING


WHAT WAS THAT, BACK THERE?
THERE'S STILL AN UNEASY FEELING IN MY CHEST
I'M HOME
I'VE JUST RETURNED, AUNT
WELCOME HOME YOU'RE HOME EARLY! WE WERE JUST ABOUT TO HAVE SOME TEA, WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN US?
YOU SEEM AWFULLY TIRED, SAHOKO-CHAN. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
AH, IT'S NOTHING REALLY. I'M SORRY. I WAS TALKING A LOT TODAY WITH SOME PEOPLE FROM MY NEW SECTION, SO I REALLY HAD TO FOCUS ON THEM
EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE TALKING WITH GIRLS FROM YOUR SECTION?


BEFORE I SPEAK, I CONSIDER WHETHER WHAT I'M GOING TO SAY WILL BE APPROPRIATE. ANYWAY, I CAN'T AFFORD TO MAKE ANY MISTAKES.
I HAVE TO DO MY BEST SO THAT I DON'T CAUSE ANY MORE TROUBLE FOR MY PARENTS.
SAHOKO-CHAN, WHEN YOU CAME TO LIVE IN THIS HOUSE, I THOUGHT THAT WE AGREED THAT YOU WOULD FOLLOW MY POLICIES.
DON'T FEEL THAT YOU OWE ME ANYTHING.
YOU SHOULD TAKE IT EASY AND BE YOURSELF. DON'T TRY TO FIT YOURSELF INTO SOME MOLD.
YES, MA'AM. I UNDERSTAND...


YES?
WEREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE SEEING HER PERIOD-ICALLY?
YOUR COUNSELOR CALLED. SHE ASKED US TO TELL YOU TO COME SEE HER SOMETIMES
YES. WHAT IS IT?
AH, RIO, HOW'S IT GOING?
GOODBYE
CLICK
ALL RIGHT, I UNDER-STAND HOLD ON A SECOND!
SHE SEEMS TO HAVE GOTTEN THE WRONG IMPRESSION. SHE THINKS WE'RE PURPOSELY TREATING YOU BADLY. COULD YOU SET HER STRAIGHT?
YOU SEE! HE WAS IN SUCH A GOOD MOOD UP UNTIL NOW
Waa
Waa
Waa
HM? AH.
HEY! HURRY UP AND GIVE MA-KUN HIS BATH!


YEAH.
WAS THAT RIO YOU WERE ON THE PHONE WITH?
WELL, HOW ABOUT YOU STAY HERE ALONE THEN? IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT WE SHOULD LIVE THERE
WE DON'T HAVE MUCH OF A CHOICE. IT'S BECAUSE OF THE COMPANY.
I BET SHE'S ENJOYING HERSELF IN THAT BIG HOUSE, WHILE WE'RE STUCK IN THIS SMALL APARTMENT. WHAT A SPLENDID SOCIAL POSITION
THE TRUTH IS, THERE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM IF SHE WASN'T THERE
SHIGEKO...
I WISH SHE HAD STAYED IN THE HOSPITAL FOREVER

WHERE'S MOM? IS SHE OUT SHOPPING?

WHAT WAS SHE THINKING, LEAVING YOU HERE LIKE THIS?
NOT COMING BACK?
YOUR MOTHER LEFT.
SHE'S PROBABLY NOT COMING BACK
RIO, YOUR MOTHER IS A HORRIBLE WOMAN
REMEMBER THAT.
R
I LOVE MOM
SHE HASN'T DONE ANYTHING WRONG
THIS IS MY FAULT.
I'M SURE OF IT

I HATE
MYSELF.

AH, THE SUDDEN ENGAGEMENT ANNOUNCEMENT?
DID YOU SEE IT? THAT TV SHOW THAT WAS ON YESTERDAY?
YEAH, I SAW IT! IT TOTALLY SURPRISED ME, I DIDN'T SEE IT COMING! THEY DO SUIT EACH OTHER, THOUGH.
AH! YOU KNOW, IT'S PEOPLE WHO SHOUT THINGS LIKE THAT WHO END UP GETTING MARRIED LATE.
"LET'S CRY FROM HAPPINESS!", ♡ RIGHT? SO BEAUTIFUL! DARN IT, I DON'T CARE ABOUT EXAMS ANYMORE! I WANT TO GET MARRIED RIGHT AWAY!
WHAT? NO, I DON'T THINK I AM. BUT, WELL, MAYBE I AM...
YEAH, HIGA-SAN DOES SEEM LIKE THAT TYPE. SHE'LL PROBABLY HAVE A HAPPY LIFE.
SAHOKO-CHAN IS THE TYPE TO DECIDE QUICKLY
DON'T SAY THINGS LIKE THAT, IT'S BAD LUCK!

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TRANSLATED BY: SAILOR AVALON
SCANNED BY: TINY SNOWFAIRY

hahaha
haha
HMPH. I GUESS HAPPINESS AND FATE ARE FAR AWAY FOR ME
YOU SHOULD COME!
YOU WANT TO COME TOO, HIGA-SAN?
WELL THEN, DO YOU WANT TO COME TO MY HOUSE AFTER SCHOOL? I TAPED IT.
I MISSED THAT PRESS CONFERENCE! DARN IT!
...
OKAY...
YEAH!
THERE ARE A LOT OF PRETTY HOUSES IN THIS AREA.

I WANT TO LIVE THERE!
HEY, LOOK AT THAT ONE! IT'S SUPER CUTE
WHAT? WHY?
SHE LIVES THERE ALL ALONE IN THAT BIG HOUSE, IT SEEMS
WHAT!?
OH, THAT'S SAKAKI-SAN'S HOUSE.
OOH, WHAT IS IT, WHAT IS IT!?
CITY A IS SORT OF FAR AWAY, BUT NOT FAR ENOUGH THAT SHE COULDN'T COMMUTE HERE FROM THERE
HER FATHER WAS TRANSFERRED TO CITY A, SO THE FAMILY MOVED THERE, BUT SHE STAYED HERE
SAKAKI-SAN'S MOTHER LEFT HOME YEARS AGO.
WELL, IT SEEMS THE SITUATION IS SORT OF COMPLICATED.

YOU KNOW A LOT OF DETAILS, AYA-CHAN
WELL, IT'S MY MOTHER'S NETWORK THE WOMEN AROUND HERE KNOW A LOT OF GOSSIP.
IT'S SORT OF SCARY
WOW.
AND RIGHT AFTER THAT, HER FATHER REMARRIED WITH A REALLY YOUNG WOMAN, BUT RIGHT AFTER, HER PREGNANCY SHOWED WELL, IN OTHER WORDS, IT WAS THE CHILD OF A PREVIOUS LOVER.
THEY EVEN HAD TO CALL AN AMBULANCE ONCE
AFTER THAT, IT SEEMS THERE WAS STILL A LOT OF FRICTION BETWEEN THEM, I'M NOT SURE WHY
I FOUND ONE OF YOUR PHOTO ALBUMS. THIS IS YOU WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE, RIGHT? YOU WERE SO CUTE!
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?

MY YOUNGER SISTER
OH, WHO'S THE BABY?
OH I SEE...
YOUNGER SISTER? I DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD ONE.
I ONLY HAD ONE FOR SIX MONTHS
HEY, WHO'S THE PRETTY WOMAN? YOUR MOTHER?
WHAT? HEY! I WAS STILL LOOKING AT THAT.

I'M BORED I'M GOING HOME
YOU CAN'T GO HOME
YOU CAN'T.

I'M SORRY FOR SKIPPING APPOINTMENTS
I'M GLAD YOU CAME. I GOT THESE AT A CONFERENCE IN KYUSHU. THEY'RE PRETTY TASTY. HELP YOURSELF
I'M STILL ALIVE
SO, HOW HAVE THINGS BEEN LATELY?
THAT'S OKAY. IT'S NOT LIKE IT'S YOUR DUTY TO COME. YOU COULD SAY IT'S JUST MY OPINION THAT YOU SHOULD.
HAVE YOU BEEN GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP?
YOU HAVE QUITE A SENSE OF HUMOR.
EVERY NIGHT, I HAVE THE SAME DREAM
I HATE SLEEPING MORE THAN ANYTHING

WHAT KIND OF DREAM?
I'M IN A DARK CORRIDOR, WITH A LOT OF DOORS.
EACH BECOMES A MEMORY FROM THE PAST, AN IMAGE OF SOMETHING THAT I DON'T WANT TO REMEMBER. THEY ALL APPEAR IN FRONT OF ME, AND IT'S AS THOUGH THEY ARE ALL HAPPENING IN THE PRESENT.
IT'S LIKE A BAD PENALTY GAME
WHEN I OPEN A DOOR, THE ROOM IS PACKED TO THE CEILING WITH BALLOONS.
WHEN I PUSH THROUGH ONE OF THE GAPS AND ENTER THE ROOM, I CAN'T BREATHE.
BUT WHEN I STRUGGLE, THE BALLOONS ALL BREAK

I WONDER WHAT IT IS I DID.
AND IF IT IS, I WONDER WHAT IT IS A PUNISHMENT FOR
I DON'T REMEMBER, AND SO IT'S LIKE I'M BECOMING ONE OF THE BALLOONS FROM THE DREAM, AND AM GOING TO DRIFT AWAY SOMEWHERE.
I WANT SOMEONE TO CATCH ME, BUT I DON'T THINK IT WOULD GO WELL.
THE THING THAT BOTHERS ME THE MOST IS THAT I CAN'T CONTROL MYSELF.
I WONDER WHY IT IS THAT I'LL ALWAYS BE TRAPPED BY THE PAST, EVEN THOUGH I KNOW THAT I JUST DON'T CARE ANYMORE

I DON'T REALLY UNDERSTAND IT.
NOT YET.
DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE? YOU HAVE ENTRANCE EXAMS NEXT YEAR, RIGHT? HAVE YOU DECIDED ON A FIRST CHOICE?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "FUTURE?"
YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN GOOD AT MATH, HAVEN'T YOU, RIO-KUN? I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT STUDY IN THAT FIELD IN THE FUTURE.
TIME IS FROZEN..

SHE'S HAVING REPEATED FLASHBACKS THAT CREATE WEAK EMOTIONAL RESPONSES, AS WELL AS FITS OF ANXIETY. SHE ALSO SEEMS TO HAVE SERIOUS INSOMNIA
SHE WONDERS ABOUT THE VALUE OF OUR EXISTENCE
THE FUTURE DOES NOT EXIST, ONLY THE PRESENT AND THE PAST. THE PRESENT IS SLOWLY BECOMING THE PAST. IT SEEMS LIKE THE ONLY THING LEFT IS THE PLACE ONE IS STANDING IN NOW.
I THINK SHE'S FIGHTING, WITH WILLPOWER. I'VE BEEN GIVING HER MEDICAL TREATMENT, BUT THAT HAS ITS LIMITS
WE NEED SOMETHING ELSE. WE NEED TO FIND SOME OTHER WAY OF HEALING HER
DID SHE SAY THAT HERSELF?
I THINK THAT'S STOPPED.
Have some
Here
WHAT ABOUT THE SELF-MUTILATION?
NO, YOU!
THE BLACK TEA?
AMAI!*
NO, BUT SHE DIDN'T GIVE ANY INDICATION SHE WAS CONTINUING TO DO IT, AND THERE WERE NO NEW WOUNDS.

*THIS CAN MEAN EITHER "SWEET," AS IN THE CASE OF FOOD, OR "OPTIMISTIC," AS WHEN DESCRIBING A PERSON.

WELL, OF COURSE, I WOULD BE HAPPY IF SHE WERE TO BECOME OUR DAUGHTER. IT WOULD BE LIKE A DREAM.
IT'S A VERY UNIQUE CASE, AND THERE ARE A LOT OF PROBLEMS, BUT I WANT TO TAKE THE RISK
YOU MEAN ADOPTING HER AS OUR DAUGHTER?
WON'T YOU RETHINK WHAT WE HAD DISCUSSED BEFORE?
THAT IS, OUR FEELINGS FOR HER ARE COMPOSED NOT ONLY OF LOVE, BUT OF A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AS WELL.
BUT, EVEN IF WE DON'T WANT TO, WE HAVE TO LOOK AT THINGS CLEARLY
BUT RIGHT NOW, THAT FAMILY IS ONLY A DANGER TO HER.
YES, THAT'S TRUE...
WE ARE LARGELY RESPONSIBLE FOR HER CURRENT STATE BECAUSE OF THAT FACT, AND OUR REGRETS, WE CAN'T RUN AWAY FROM THIS, CAN WE?

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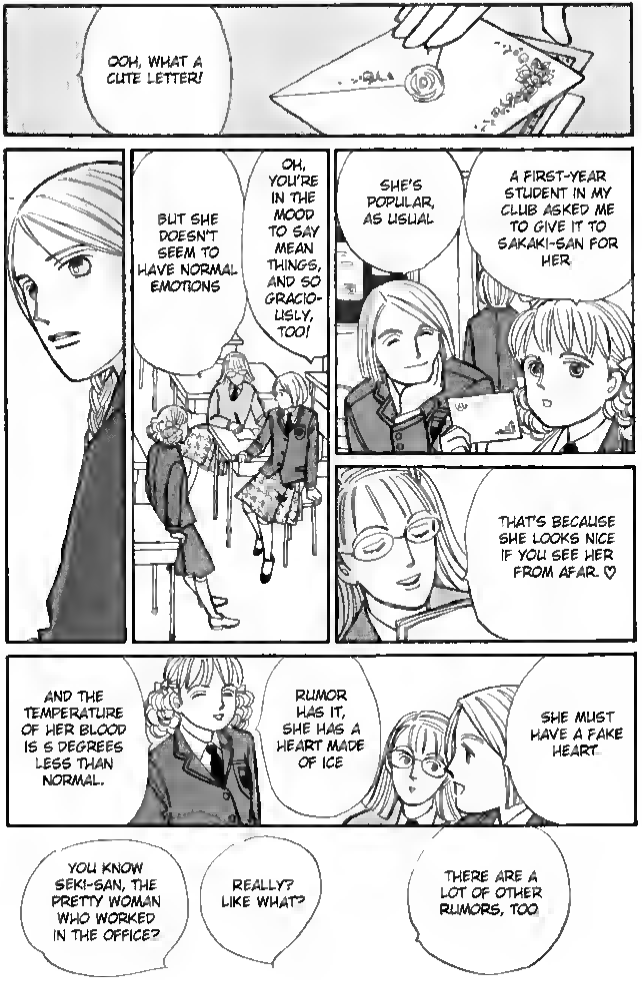
TRANSLATED BY: SAILOR AVALON
SCANNED BY: TINY SNOWFAIRY

CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
COME HERE. HURRY!
IT'LL GET EASIER, C'MON!
CLIMB HIGHER!

COME HERE HIGHER!
COME HERE.
EVERYONE GOES AWAY
THERE'S NO ONE LEFT
THERE'S NO ONE HERE

# ピエタ I


OOH, WHAT A CUTE LETTER!
A FIRST-YEAR STUDENT IN MY CLUB ASKED ME TO GIVE IT TO SAKAKI-SAN FOR HER
SHE'S POPULAR, AS USUAL
THAT'S BECAUSE SHE LOOKS NICE IF YOU SEE HER FROM AFAR. ♡
OH, YOU'RE IN THE MOOD TO SAY MEAN THINGS, AND SO GRACIOUSLY, TOO!
BUT SHE DOESN'T SEEM TO HAVE NORMAL EMOTIONS
SHE MUST HAVE A FAKE HEART
RUMOR HAS IT, SHE HAS A HEART MADE OF ICE
AND THE TEMPERATURE OF HER BLOOD IS 5 DEGREES LESS THAN NORMAL.
THERE ARE A LOT OF OTHER RUMORS, TOO.
REALLY? LIKE WHAT?
YOU KNOW SEKI-SAN, THE PRETTY WOMAN WHO WORKED IN THE OFFICE?

WHAT!? NO FAIR!!
NO, I CAN'T TELL YOU
WELL, THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE REASON, BUT THE TRUTH IS—
WHAT? DIDN'T SHE GET MARRIED? THAT'S WHAT I HEARD
WELL, SHE QUIT RATHER SUDDENLY, DIDN'T SHE? I WONDER WHY THAT WAS?
WELL, DURING CLASSES, IN THE EMPTY LIBRARY—
WHAT!? WHAT IS IT?!
SOUNDS INTERESTING
HIGA-SAN
UH... UM, ERR... SAKAKI-SAN, THIS IS FROM A FIRST-YEAR STUDENT
♪
GO ON, I WANT TO HEAR WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.

WHAT?
THIS WAY
drop
TAKEKAWA-SENSEI IS ASKING FOR YOU
UM...

IS THAT SO...
SECTION E, BUT I CAME PARTWAY THROUGH THE YEAR.
Step
WHAT SECTION WERE YOU IN LAST YEAR?
I'VE SEEN YOU SOMEWHERE BEFORE...
RIO-CHAN!
I'M REALLY NOT SURE...
I COULD BE WRONG, BUT...
WHAT?

DO YOU REALLY ENJOY THEIR COMPANY?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? I LOOKED FOR YOU ALL OVER!
LET'S GO!
SAKAKI-SAN, WHAT ABOUT TAKEKAWA-SENSEI?
HIGA-SAN, YOU'RE ALWAYS HANGING OUT WITH THOSE SAME GIRLS...
WHAT!?
I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU OUTSIDE THE CLASS-ROOM FOR A MINUTE
OH, THAT WAS SOMETHING I MADE UP.

NOTHING.
WHAT DID YOU WANT WITH HIGA-SAN?
SHE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THE SORT OF PERSON WHO WOULD DO THAT, SURPRISINGLY.
SOMETHING MUST HAVE HAPPENED TO HER THAT MADE HER LEAVE HER PREVIOUS SCHOOL.
SHE CAME IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SEMESTER, AND WHEN SOMEONE ASKS HER ABOUT HER PREVIOUS SCHOOL, SHE WON'T GIVE THEM A STRAIGHT ANSWER.
THERE'S SOMETHING WEIRD ABOUT HER
RIO-CHAN!?

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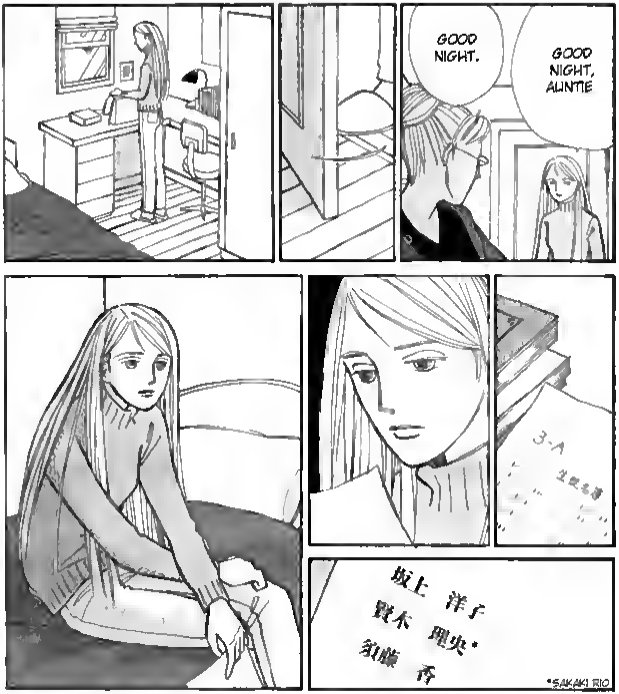
I'VE BEEN HERE FOR A LONG TIME

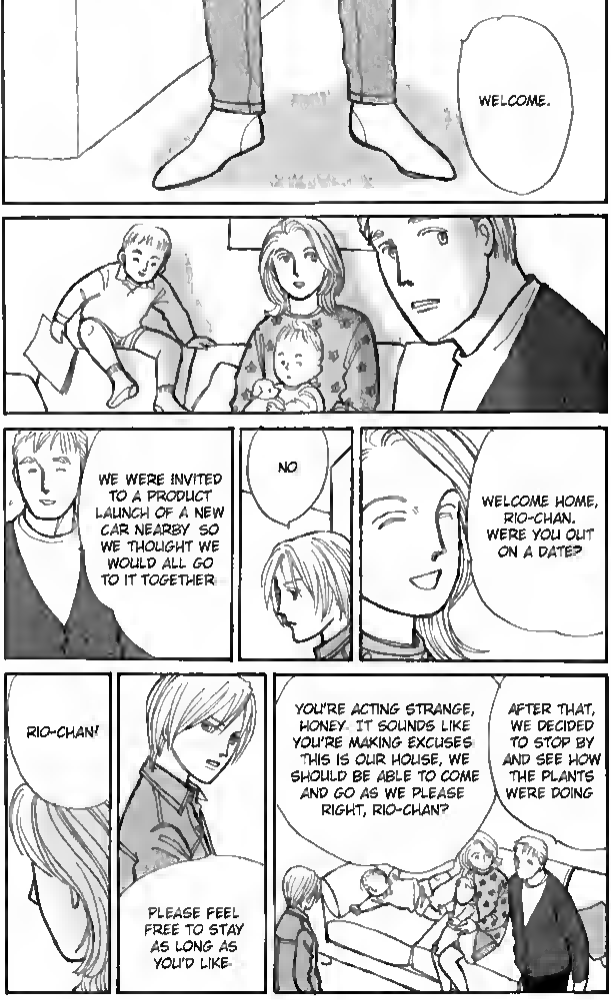
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR A LONG TIME

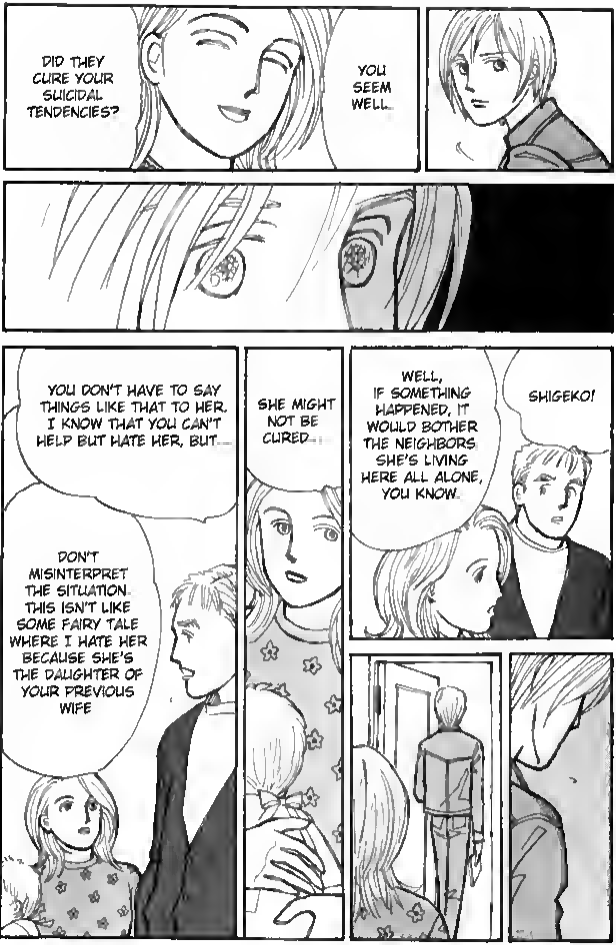



I CLOSE THE DOOR

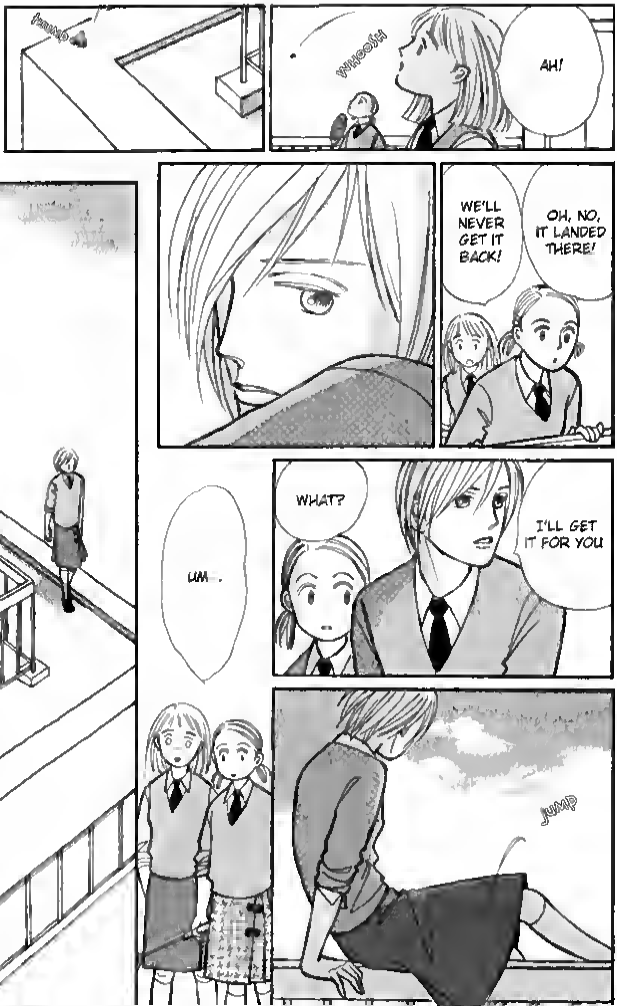
AND RETURN TO TIMELESS SPACE

.....
ha
ha
ha
ha
ha
ha

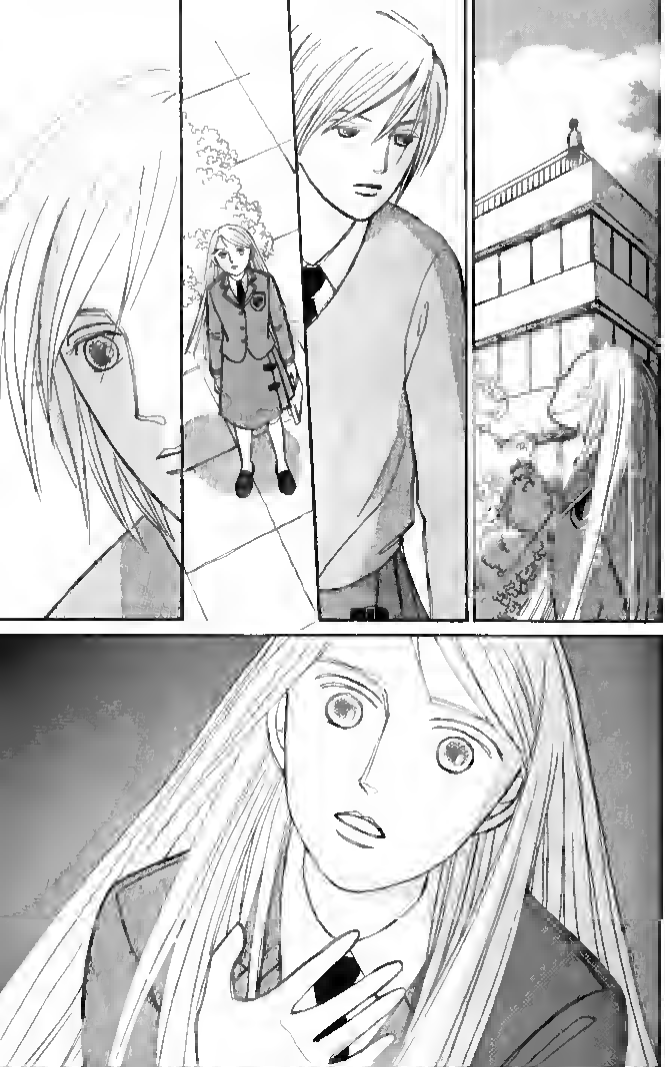

WELCOME.
WE WERE INVITED TO A PRODUCT LAUNCH OF A NEW CAR NEARBY SO WE THOUGHT WE WOULD ALL GO TO IT TOGETHER
NO
WELCOME HOME, RIO-CHAN. WERE YOU OUT ON A DATE?
RIO-CHAN!
PLEASE FEEL FREE TO STAY AS LONG AS YOU'D LIKE
YOU'RE ACTING STRANGE, HONEY. IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE MAKING EXCUSES THIS IS OUR HOUSE, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO COME AND GO AS WE PLEASE RIGHT, RIO-CHAN?
AFTER THAT, WE DECIDED TO STOP BY AND SEE HOW THE PLANTS WERE DOING


DID THEY CURE YOUR SUICIDAL TENDENCIES?
YOU SEEM WELL.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO SAY THINGS LIKE THAT TO HER. I KNOW THAT YOU CAN'T HELP BUT HATE HER, BUT...
DON'T MISINTERPRET THE SITUATION. THIS ISN'T LIKE SOME FAIRY TALE WHERE I HATE HER BECAUSE SHE'S THE DAUGHTER OF YOUR PREVIOUS WIFE
SHE MIGHT NOT BE CURED...
WELL, IF SOMETHING HAPPENED, IT WOULD BOTHER THE NEIGHBORS. SHE'S LIVING HERE ALL ALONE, YOU KNOW.
SHIGEKO!

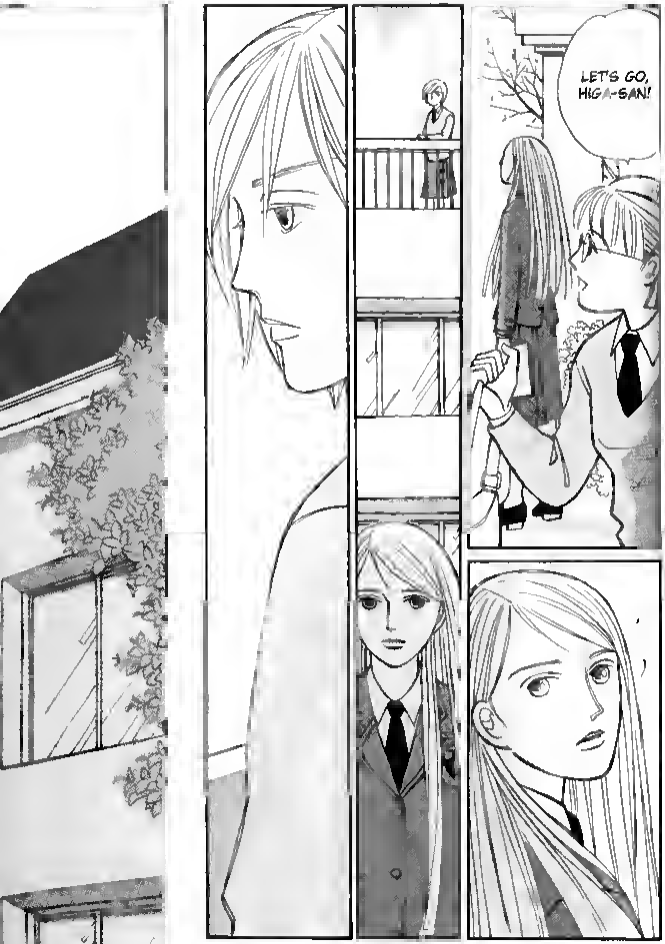
BUT RIO ISN'T—
I KNOW SHE IS THE SORT OF PERSON WHO WOULD DESTROY THAT.
I JUST WANT TO HAVE A NORMAL, HAPPY LIFE, LIKE I'VE DREAMED OF.
YOU CERTAINLY SEEM TO WORRY ABOUT HER A LOT.
……
YOUR PAST WIFE WAS PRETTY SHOWY, WASN'T SHE?
ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING THAT SHE MIGHT NOT EVEN BE YOUR CHILD.
AH! I REALLY DO LIKE THIS HOUSE. IT HAS SUCH A BIG GARDEN, TOO.
I KNOW I CAN'T COUNT ON YOU TO DO ANYTHING.
I HAVE TO FIND SOME WAY FOR US TO MOVE BACK SOON, FOR THE SAKE OF OUR CHILDREN.


Pumpp
WHOOSH
AH!
WE'LL NEVER GET IT BACK!
OH, NO, IT LANDED THERE!
WHAT?
I'LL GET IT FOR YOU
UM...
JUMP

DON'T PUSH YOURSELF TOO FAR!
YOU DON'T HAVE TO, SAKAKI-SAN!
!?
SIGH

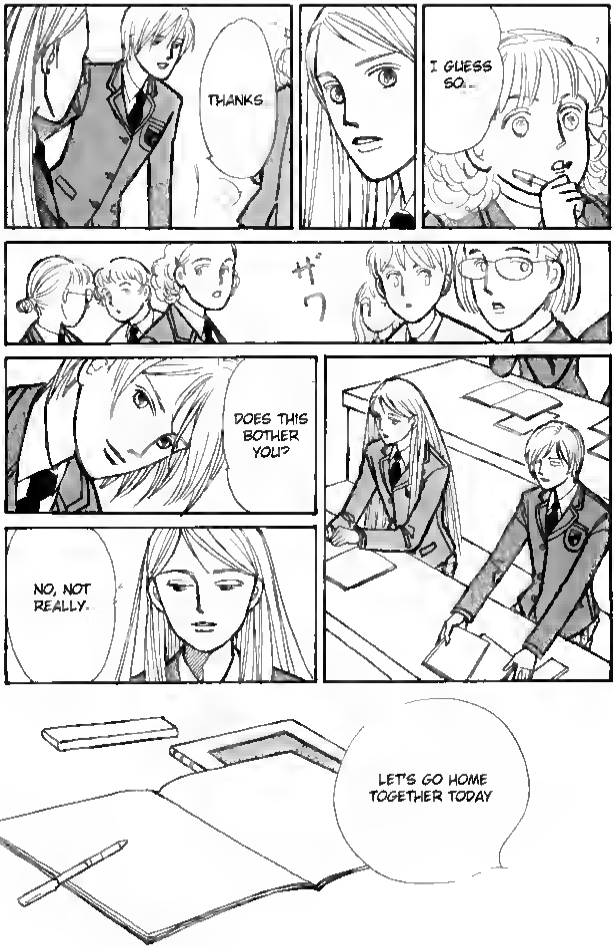


EDITED BY: KAIJA
TRANSLATED BY: SAILOR AVALON
SCANNED BY: TINY SNOWFAIRY

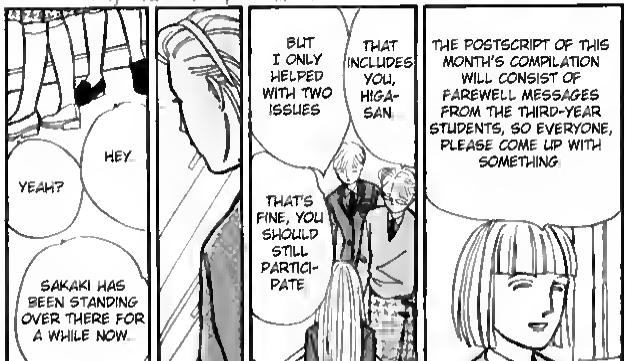

LET'S GO, HIGA-SAN!

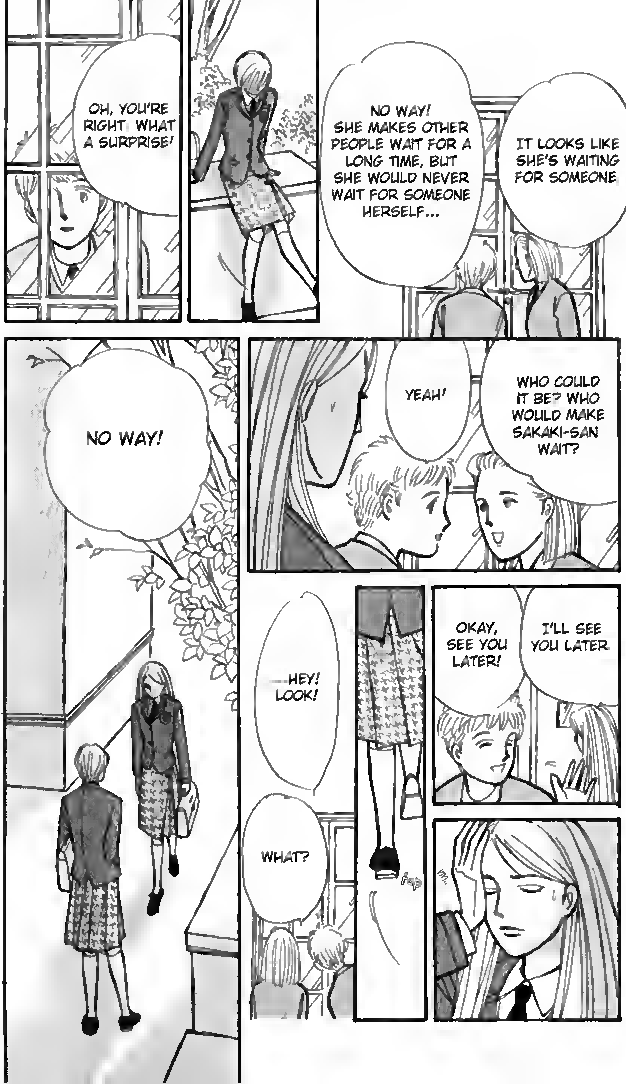
I'M FINE
THAT SOUNDS LIKE A BAD COLD. SHOULD YOU GO HOME, SAKAKI-SAN?
COUGH
THE TIERED CLASS-ROOM
WHERE'S THE NEXT CLASS?
OH, WE HAVE TO MOVE? THAT'S A PAIN
OH, SHOW ME, SHOW ME!
YEAH, FOR NOW
DID YOU FINISH, HIGA-SAN?
LET'S GO
KUN
OVER HERE, RIO-CHAN!

.....
.....
.....
SHE'S GONNA BE MAD
AKASHI'S REPUTATION IS RUINED!
YEAH, I DID. THE DECISIVE MOMENT!
DID YOU SEE THAT!
WOULD YOU SWITCH SEATS WITH ME, WAKANA-SAN?
bump


THANKS
I GUESS SO...
ザワ
DOES THIS BOTHER YOU?
NO, NOT REALLY.
LET'S GO HOME TOGETHER TODAY

I'M BUSY WITH A CLUB EVENT TODAY, SO I'LL BE LEAVING LATE.
THEN I'LL WAIT FOR YOU.
DO I NEED A REASON FOR SOMETHING SO TRIVIAL?
WHY?
DING DONG DING


HEY.
YEAH?
SAKAKI HAS BEEN STANDING OVER THERE FOR A WHILE NOW.
BUT I ONLY HELPED WITH TWO ISSUES
THAT INCLUDES YOU, HIGA-SAN.
THAT'S FINE, YOU SHOULD STILL PARTICI-PATE
THE POSTSCRIPT OF THIS MONTH'S COMPILATION WILL CONSIST OF FAREWELL MESSAGES FROM THE THIRD-YEAR STUDENTS, SO EVERYONE, PLEASE COME UP WITH SOMETHING


OH, YOU'RE RIGHT. WHAT A SURPRISE!
NO WAY! SHE MAKES OTHER PEOPLE WAIT FOR A LONG TIME, BUT SHE WOULD NEVER WAIT FOR SOMEONE HERSELF...
IT LOOKS LIKE SHE'S WAITING FOR SOMEONE
NO WAY!
YEAH!
WHO COULD IT BE? WHO WOULD MAKE SAKAKI-SAN WAIT?
OKAY, SEE YOU LATER!
I'LL SEE YOU LATER.
HEY! LOOK!
WHAT?
Pop

SO YOU REALLY ARE JUST LIKE EVERYONE SAYS, RIO.
LET'S GO.
UM... I...
YOU WEREN'T THAT LATE AFTER ALL
YOU DON'T CARE ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE'S FEELINGS AT ALL
LATER.
THAT'S RIGHT.
.. I KNOW THE TRUTH.

I CAN TELL EVERYONE ABOUT THE SCARS ON YOUR WRISTS, YOU KNOW!
I KNOW WHY YOU ALWAYS WEAR THE LONG-SLEEVED UNIFORM, EVEN DURING SUMMER AND DURING GYM CLASS.
WELL? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?
DO YOU WANT ME TO TELL YOU THAT I LOVE YOU?
IS THAT A THREAT?
AND HERE I THOUGHT IT WAS A GOOD THING THAT YOU'RE SO PROUD.

ピエタ I

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THIS, IT'S REALLY NOTHING.
YOU'RE LIKE A DEVIL.
I AM A DEVIL
DO YOU HATE DEVILS?

FINE, DON'T...
YOU COMING OR NOT?

I HEARD THE SOUND OF WAVES BREAKING SOMEWHERE

IN THE DARKNESS.

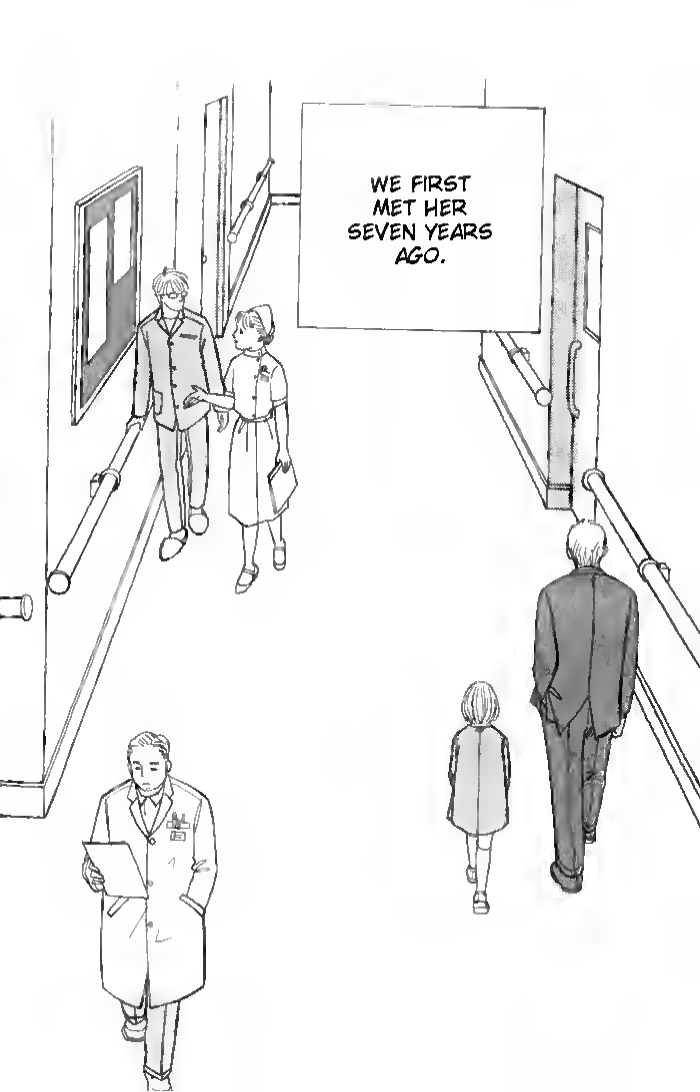
DO YOU REMEMBER?

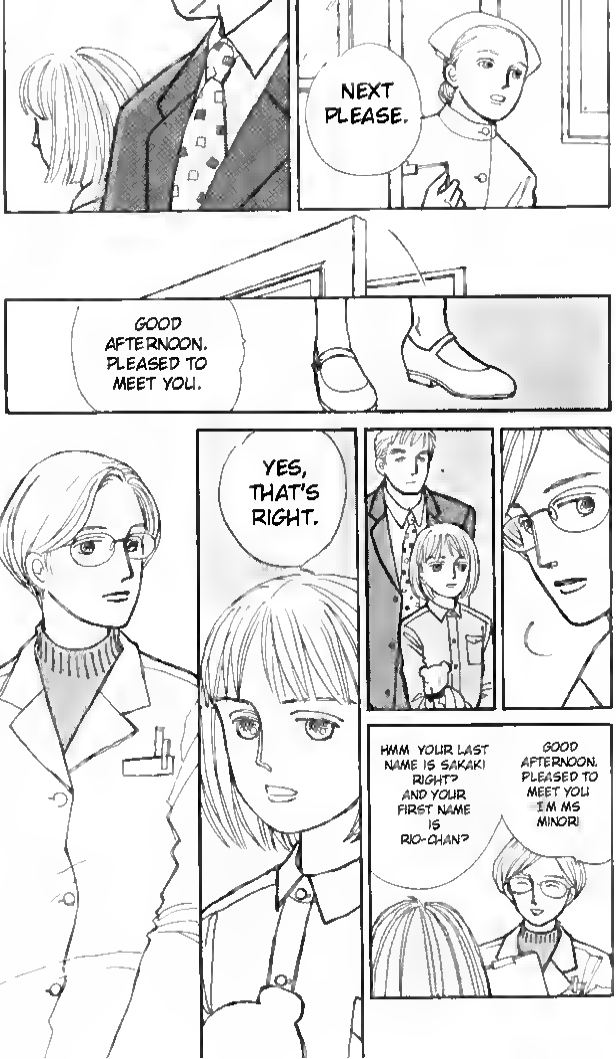
THAT SOUND,

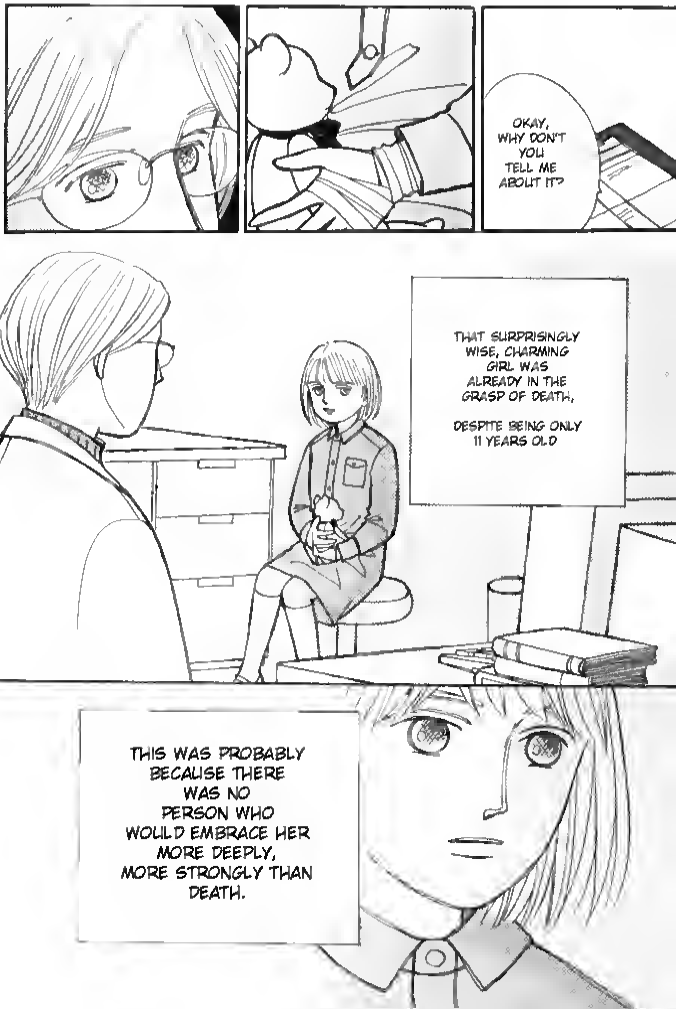
THAT TENDER SCALE REPEATING

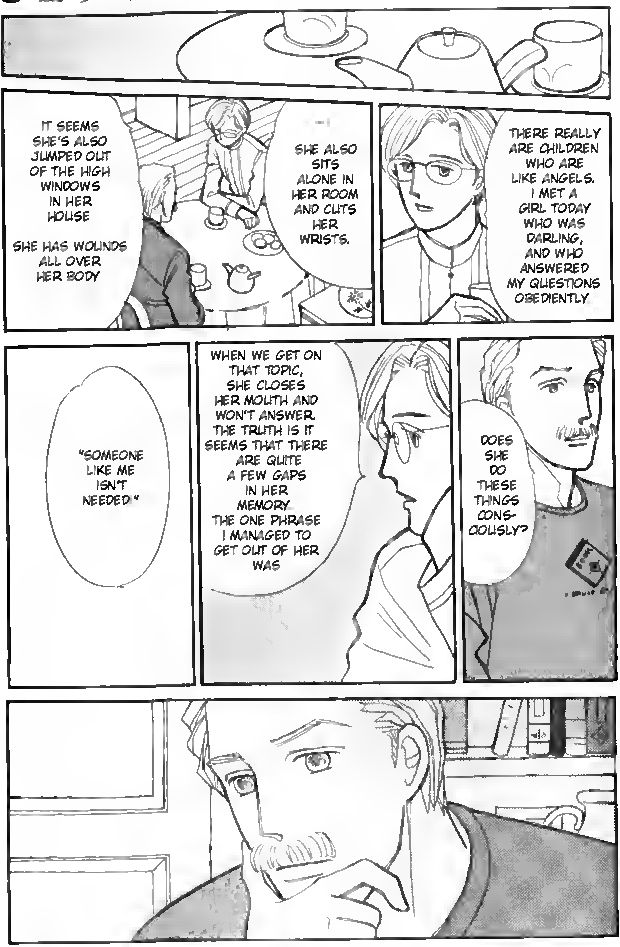
「PIETA #1」 —END—

ピエタ
—pietà—
#2

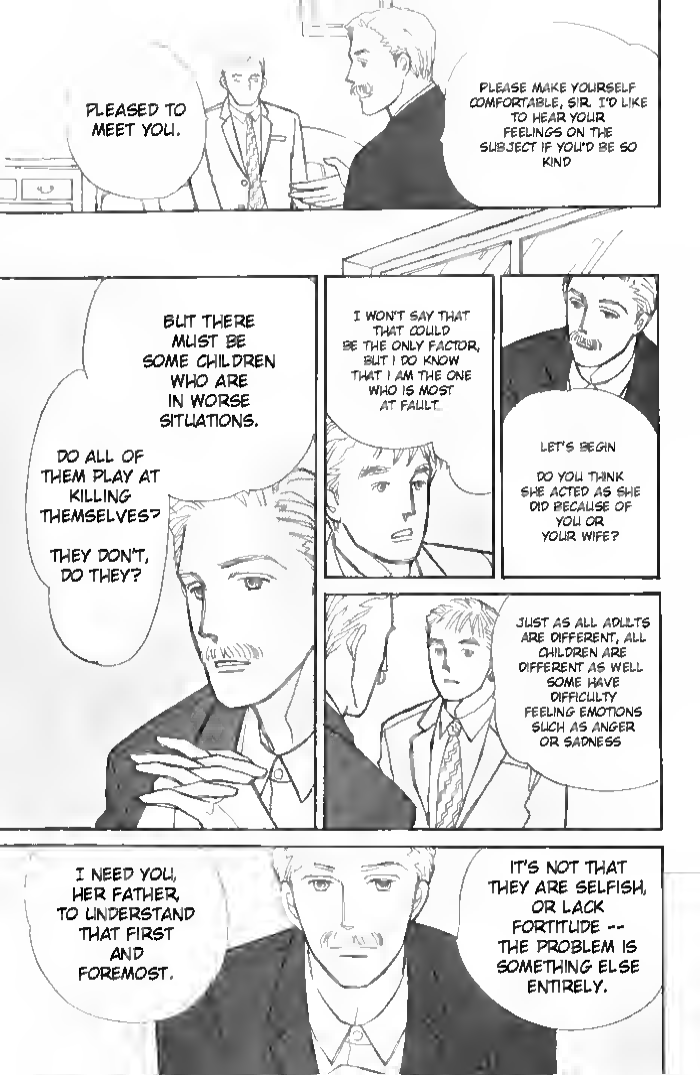

WE FIRST
MET HER
SEVEN YEARS
AGO.


NEXT PLEASE.
GOOD AFTERNOON. PLEASED TO MEET YOU.
YES, THAT'S RIGHT.
HMM YOUR LAST NAME IS SAKAKI RIGHT? AND YOUR FIRST NAME IS RIO-CHAN?
GOOD AFTERNOON. PLEASED TO MEET YOU. I'M MS MINORI


OKAY, WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME ABOUT IT?
THAT SURPRISINGLY WISE, CHARMING GIRL WAS ALREADY IN THE GRASP OF DEATH,
DESPITE BEING ONLY 11 YEARS OLD
THIS WAS PROBABLY BECAUSE THERE WAS NO PERSON WHO WOULD EMBRACE HER MORE DEEPLY, MORE STRONGLY THAN DEATH.


THERE REALLY ARE CHILDREN WHO ARE LIKE ANGELS. I MET A GIRL TODAY WHO WAS DARLING, AND WHO ANSWERED MY QUESTIONS OBEDIENTLY
SHE ALSO SITS ALONE IN HER ROOM AND CUTS HER WRISTS.
IT SEEMS SHE'S ALSO JUMPED OUT OF THE HIGH WINDOWS IN HER HOUSE
SHE HAS WOUNDS ALL OVER HER BODY
DOES SHE DO THESE THINGS CONSCIOUSLY?
WHEN WE GET ON THAT TOPIC, SHE CLOSES HER MOUTH AND WON'T ANSWER. THE TRUTH IS IT SEEMS THAT THERE ARE QUITE A FEW GAPS IN HER MEMORY. THE ONE PHRASE I MANAGED TO GET OUT OF HER WAS
"SOMEONE LIKE ME ISN'T NEEDED."

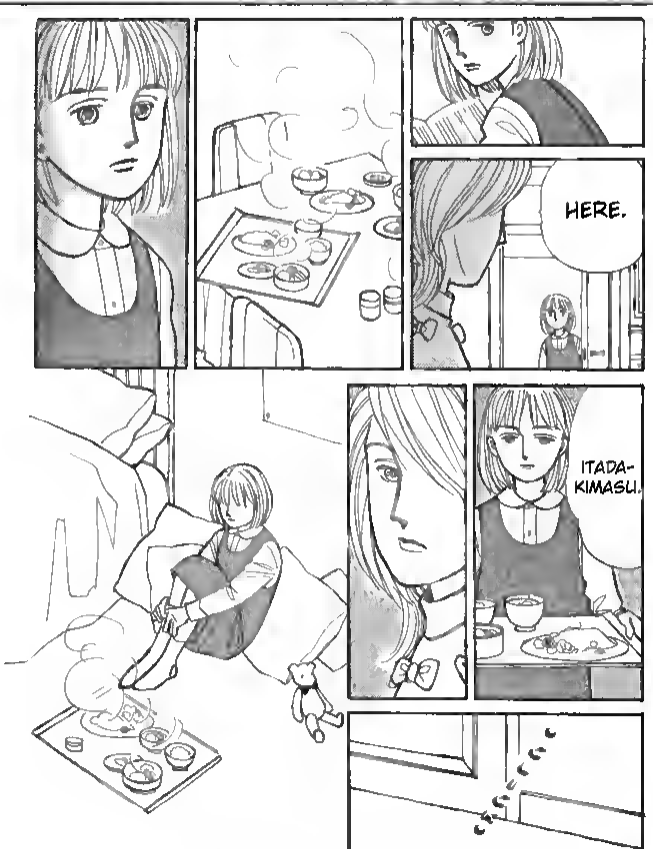
DESPITE BEING ONLY 11, SHE HAS A HISTORY OF LOSING PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAR TO HER.
HER FATHER HATED HER MOTHER, SEEING HER AS HEARTLESS, BUT RIO, WHO LOVED HER MOTHER SO MUCH, BLAMED HERSELF FOR WHAT HAPPENED
AT AGE 7, IT WAS HER SISTER.
AT AGE 10, IT WAS HER MOTHER WHO ABANDONED HER.
IT WAS AROUND THAT TIME THAT SHE BEGAN TO INDULGE IN SELF-MUTILATION.
HER INNER TURMOIL INCREASED SHORTLY AFTER THAT, WHEN HER FATHER MARRIED A PREGNANT YOUNG WOMAN.
PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY


PLEASED TO MEET YOU.
PLEASE MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE, SIR. I'D LIKE TO HEAR YOUR FEELINGS ON THE SUBJECT IF YOU'D BE SO KIND
BUT THERE MUST BE SOME CHILDREN WHO ARE IN WORSE SITUATIONS.
DO ALL OF THEM PLAY AT KILLING THEMSELVES?
THEY DON'T, DO THEY?
I WON'T SAY THAT THAT COULD BE THE ONLY FACTOR, BUT I DO KNOW THAT I AM THE ONE WHO IS MOST AT FAULT.
LET'S BEGIN
DO YOU THINK SHE ACTED AS SHE DID BECAUSE OF YOU OR YOUR WIFE?
JUST AS ALL ADULTS ARE DIFFERENT, ALL CHILDREN ARE DIFFERENT AS WELL SOME HAVE DIFFICULTY FEELING EMOTIONS SUCH AS ANGER OR SADNESS
I NEED YOU, HER FATHER, TO UNDERSTAND THAT FIRST AND FOREMOST.
IT'S NOT THAT THEY ARE SELFISH, OR LACK FORTITUDE -- THE PROBLEM IS SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY.

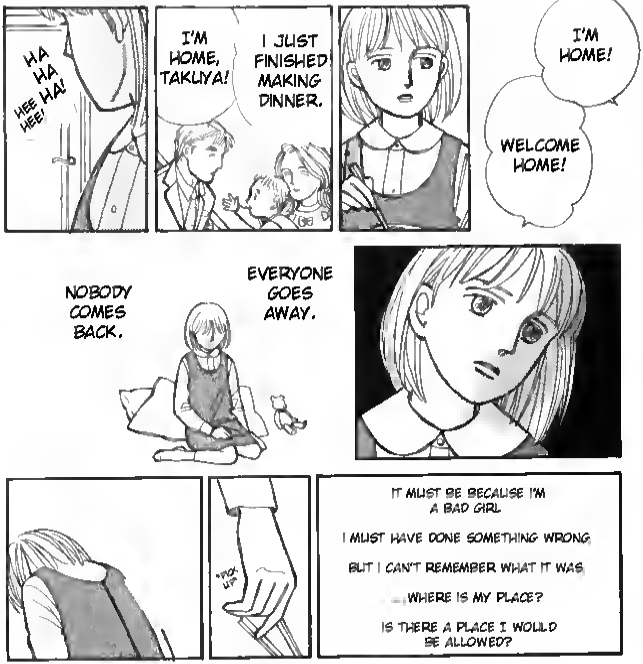
FOR A WHILE NOW I HAVE BEEN UNSURE AS TO WHETHER OR NOT I REALLY AM HER BIOLOGICAL FATHER.
IT'S NOT FAIR TO HER BUT I JUST CAN'T LOVE HER.
I'M NOT SURE I SHOULD TELL YOU THIS, DOCTOR, BUT
DOCTOR PLEASE! FIND SOME WAY TO FIX HER!
UNLIKE MY PAST WIFE, MY CURRENT WIFE IS VERY FAMILY-ORIENTED FOR THE FIRST TIME I FEEL LIKE I HAVE A FAMILY OF MY OWN. I DON'T WANT TO LOSE THAT
...
THE WAY ONE FIXES A BROKEN MACHINE?
THAT'S NOT HOW IT WORKS. I CAN ONLY SHOW YOU THE PATH. YOU HAVE TO WALK DOWN IT YOURSELVES.
EVEN THOUGH WE REPEATED THAT MANY TIMES, HER FATHER WOULDN'T LISTEN. AND SO WE LOST HOPE LITTLE BY LITTLE, UNTIL WE GAVE UP ON THE FATHER ENTIRELY

WELCOME!
LET'S BAKE COOKIES TODAY AND HAVE TEA ON THE VERANDA.
GOOD AFTERNOON. PLEASE FORGIVE THE INTRUSION.
BECAUSE WE DIDN'T HAVE ANY CHILDREN OF OUR OWN, SHE WAS LIKE A DREAM COME TRUE FOR US
WE KNEW WE WERE ACTING IN A FASHION INAPPROPRIATE FOR HER DOCTORS, BUT WE WERE SO HAPPY
ON DAYS SHE HAD FREE, WE WOULD INVITE HER OVER FOR AN AFTERNOON
THE THREE OF US WOULD HAVE A MODEST, HOME-COOKED MEAL AND LISTEN TO MUSIC TOGETHER.
IT WAS THERE THAT OUR FAILURE BEGAN
INCREDIBLE, ISN'T IT?
WE SHOULD TAKE CARE OF THE DETAILS SOON
BUT WHAT ABOUT RIO-CHAN?
BOTH OF US?!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT! AND I HAD COMPLETELY GIVEN UP ON THE IDEA!
YES, IT'S PROFESSOR WOLLES' SEMINAR. WE APPLIED A YEAR AGO, REMEMBER? WELL THE NOTICE FROM THE FOUNDATION JUST GOT HERE AND BOTH OF US ARE ACCEPTED!
AMERICA?

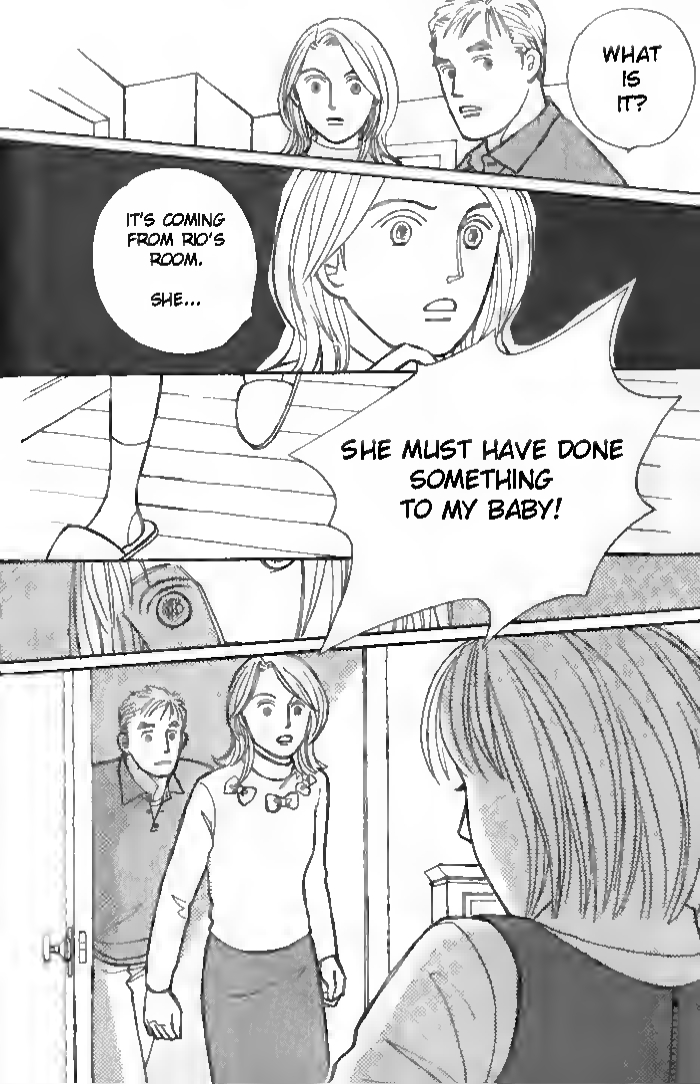
BUT IN THE END WE DECIDED TO GO...
SHE SAW US OFF WITH A SMILE AND ALTHOUGH WE KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING DARK LURKING BENEATH THAT SMILE,
AT FIRST, WE WERE GOOD ABOUT KEEPING IN TOUCH, BUT THAT DIDN'T LAST FOR LONG. WHEN WE CALLED HER FATHER WOULD JUST TELL US THAT EVERYTHING WAS FINE, THAT WE SHOULDN'T WORRY. WE ASKED A YOUNG MAN WHO WAS AN ASSISTANT AT THE HOSPITAL TO CHECK UP ON HER FOR US
HIS NEWS WAS SHOCKING
WE ENDED UP DOING THE SAME THING TO HER THAT HER PARENTS DID.
X HOSPITAL?!
THAT CAN'T BE!
OH NO...
THEY PUT HER IN X HOSPITAL, QUITE A WHILE AGO.
IT SEEMS HER FATHER FORCED HER TO GO THERE.
BUT WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED?
THAT HOSPITAL HAD A HORRIBLE REPUTATION THAT EVERYONE IN THE BUSINESS KNEW ABOUT
IN FACT, IT WAS CLOSED A YEAR LATER BECAUSE OF THE MANY ABUSES REPORTED THERE
ANYHOW, I'M GOING BACK FOR A BIT
I CAN'T JUST LEAVE HER THERE



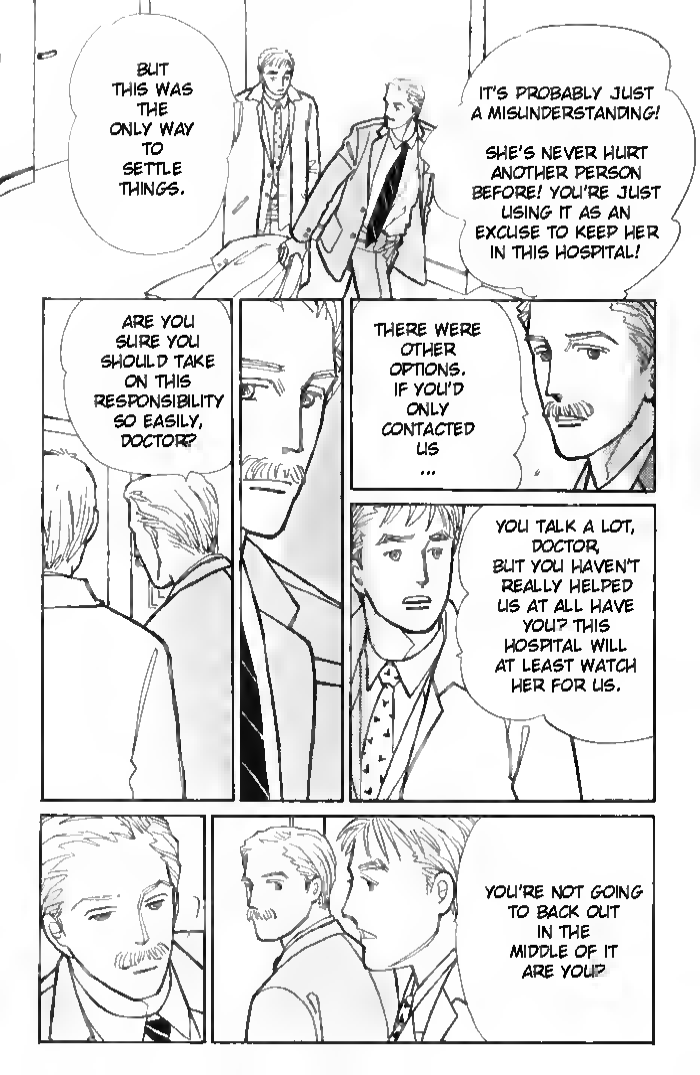

~NOTE ITADAKIMASU - A RITUAL EXPRESSION SAID BEFORE EATING ~


HA HA HA! HEE HEE!
I'M HOME, TAKUYA!
I JUST FINISHED MAKING DINNER.
I'M HOME!
WELCOME HOME!
NOBODY COMES BACK.
EVERYONE GOES AWAY.
PICK UP
IT MUST BE BECAUSE I'M A BAD GIRL
I MUST HAVE DONE SOMETHING WRONG
BUT I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS
...WHERE IS MY PLACE?
IS THERE A PLACE I WOULD BE ALLOWED?

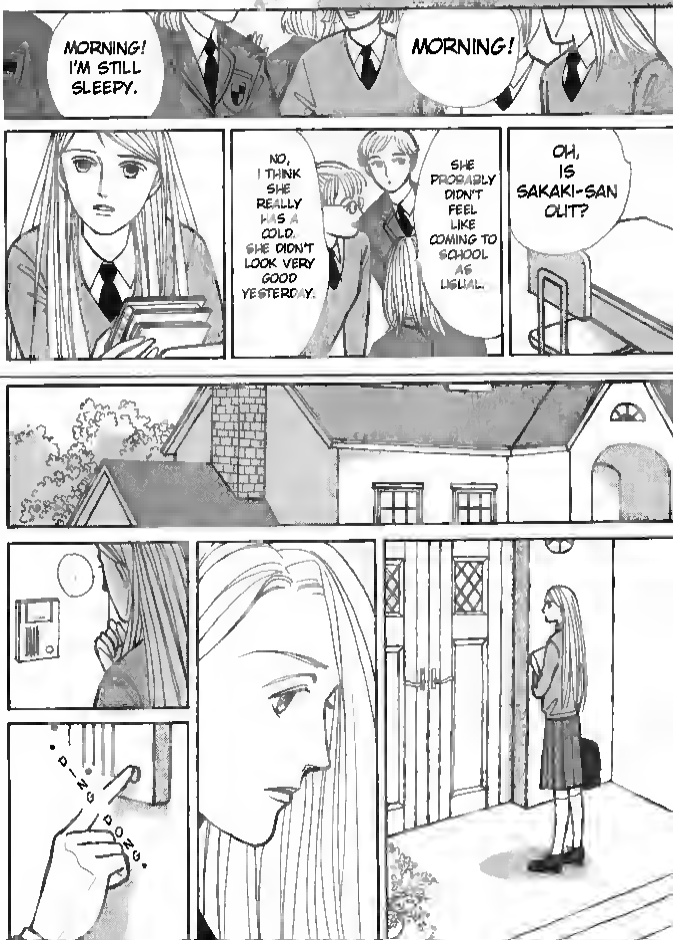
AH!
ABCD
STAY AWAY, TAKKUN!
AH
ABCD
*SNIFF SNIFF*
*SNIFF*
*SNIFF*
*BONK!*
?!
ABCD
*SLIP*
*WAA
AAH!

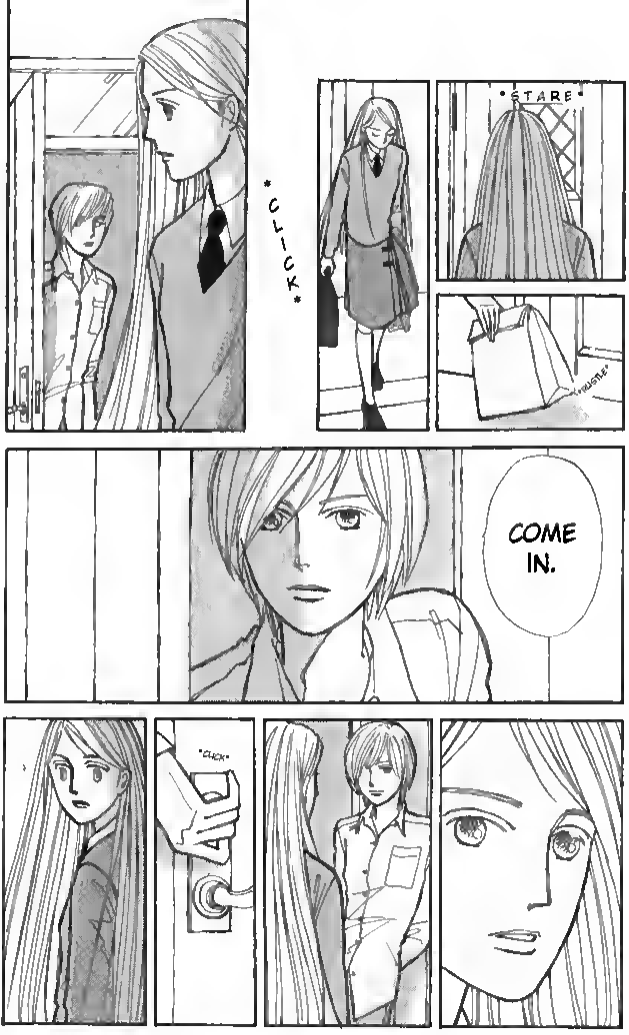

WHAT IS IT?
IT'S COMING FROM RIO'S ROOM.
SHE...
SHE MUST HAVE DONE SOMETHING TO MY BABY!

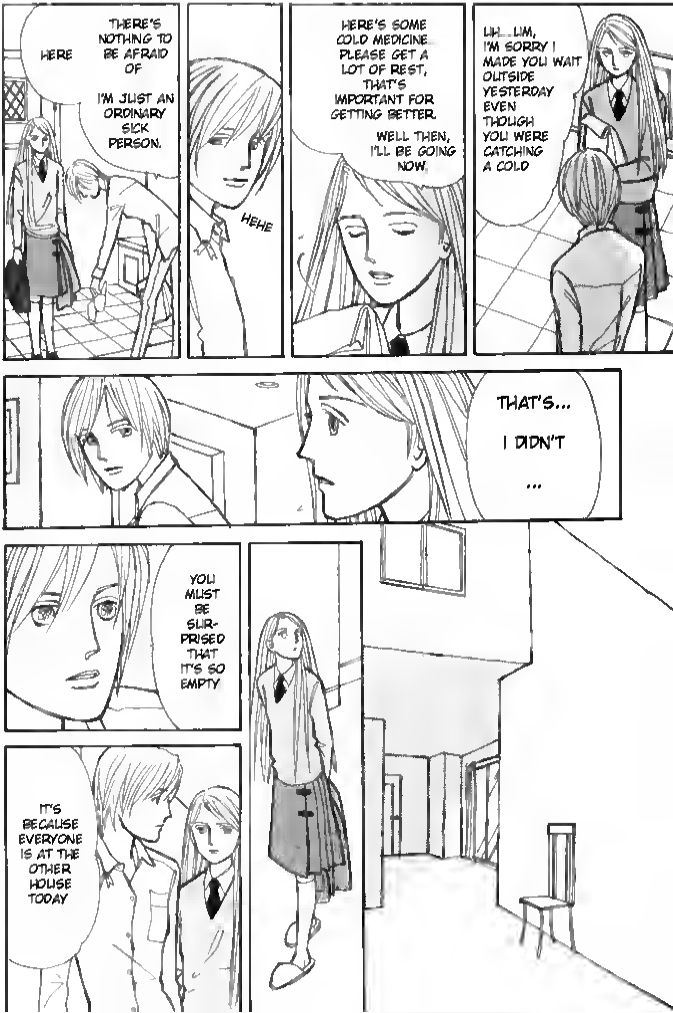
QUICK FIND A HOSPITAL, DEAR!
I DON'T CARE WHERE IT IS,
AS LONG AS THEY'LL TAKE HER!
FOR THE TIME BEING, JUST KEEP HER AWAY FROM US!
I DON'T EVEN WANT TO SEE HER FACE!


BUT THIS WAS THE ONLY WAY TO SETTLE THINGS.
IT'S PROBABLY JUST A MISUNDERSTANDING!
SHE'S NEVER HURT ANOTHER PERSON BEFORE! YOU'RE JUST USING IT AS AN EXCUSE TO KEEP HER IN THIS HOSPITAL!
ARE YOU SURE YOU SHOULD TAKE ON THIS RESPONSIBILITY SO EASILY, DOCTOR?
THERE WERE OTHER OPTIONS. IF YOU'D ONLY CONTACTED US ...
YOU TALK A LOT, DOCTOR, BUT YOU HAVEN'T REALLY HELPED US AT ALL HAVE YOU? THIS HOSPITAL WILL AT LEAST WATCH HER FOR US.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BACK OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF IT ARE YOU?

...
DOCTOR?
RIO-KUN!!
302
WELCOME BACK.
SITTING THERE IN THAT BED WAS A GIRL I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE.

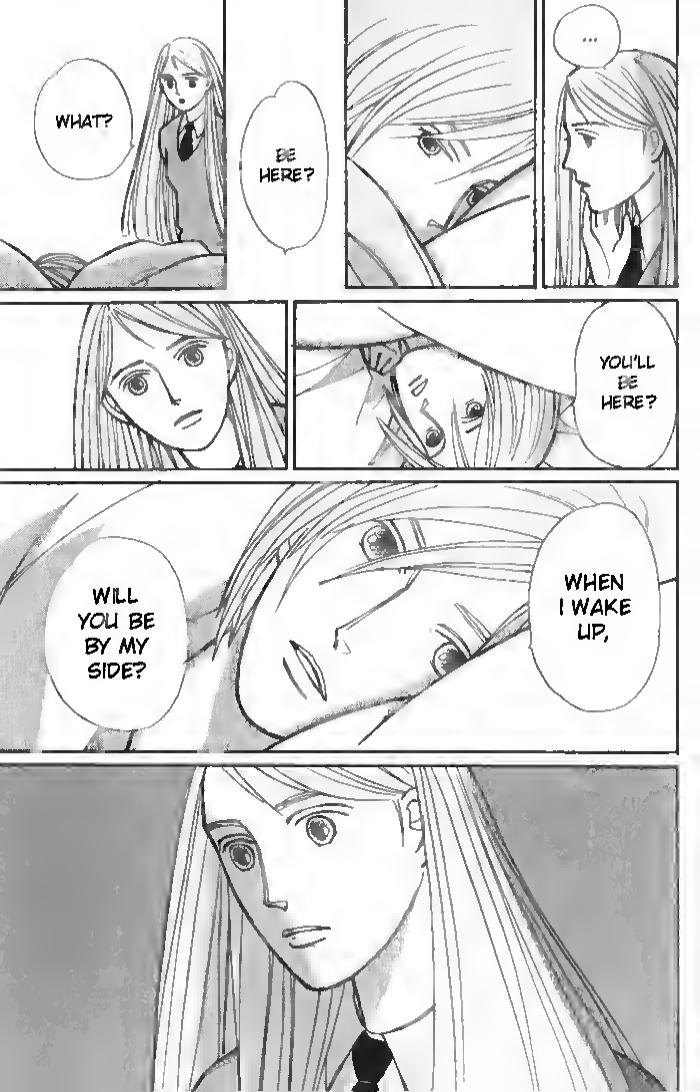

MORNING!
I'M STILL SLEEPY.
MORNING!
OH, IS SAKAKI-SAN OUT?
SHE PROBABLY DIDN'T FEEL LIKE COMING TO SCHOOL AS USUAL.
NO, I THINK SHE REALLY HAS A COLD. SHE DIDN'T LOOK VERY GOOD YESTERDAY.
DING DONG.


*CLICK*
*STARE*
*RUSTLE*
COME IN.
*CLICK*


LIH...LIM, I'M SORRY I MADE YOU WAIT OUTSIDE YESTERDAY EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE CATCHING A COLD
HERE'S SOME COLD MEDICINE. PLEASE GET A LOT OF REST, THAT'S IMPORTANT FOR GETTING BETTER.
WELL THEN, I'LL BE GOING NOW.
HEHE
THERE'S NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF
I'M JUST AN ORDINARY SICK PERSON.
HERE
THAT'S... I DIDN'T ...
YOU MUST BE SURPRISED THAT IT'S SO EMPTY
IT'S BECAUSE EVERYONE IS AT THE OTHER HOUSE TODAY

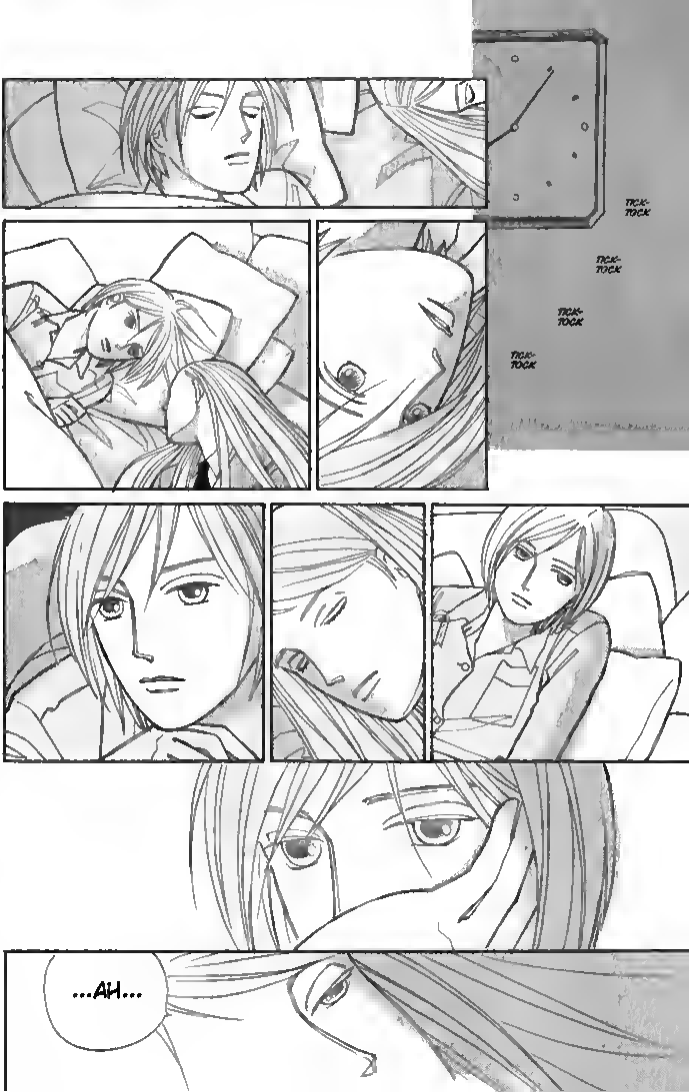
I'M SURE YOU'VE HEARD THE GOSSIP ABOUT MY FAMILY.
THIS IS A COLD MEDICINE I'VE TAKEN BEFORE.
IT SEEMS TO WORK PRETTY WELL.
IT WILL MAKE YOU SLEEPY SO YOU SHOULD SLEEP WELL.
WHEN YOU WAKE UP YOU SHOULD FEEL A LITTLE BETTER.
I DON'T WANT TO SLEEP.
WHY NOT?
I HAVE NIGHT-MARES.
BUT YOU SHOULD TRY TO SLEEP ANYWAY, BECAUSE YOU HAVE A FEVER. IF YOU DON'T SLEEP YOU WON'T GET ANY BETTER.
I DON'T CARE IF I DON'T GET BETTER.
SAKAKI-SAN, YOU'RE SORT OF
HMM?
NOTHING.
"STARE"

YOU MIGHT GET A STOMACH-ACHE IF YOU DON'T.
SEE? IT'S WRITTEN RIGHT HERE ON THE BOX.
WHAT?
AH! IF YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE THOSE YOU SHOULD EAT SOMETHING FIRST.
"POUR"
HOW DID YOU EVER MANAGE BEFORE?
HMM.
"RUSTLE"
...
CAN'T REMEMBER
...
...
I'M SLEEPY
...
"SHIFT"
WHAT?
IT'S WORKING ALREADY?!
YEAH
SOMEHOW


WHAT?
BE HERE?
...
YOU'LL BE HERE?
WHEN I WAKE UP,
WILL YOU BE BY MY SIDE?

HEHE
OKAY.
I HOPE YOU DON'T HAVE ANY NIGHTMARES.

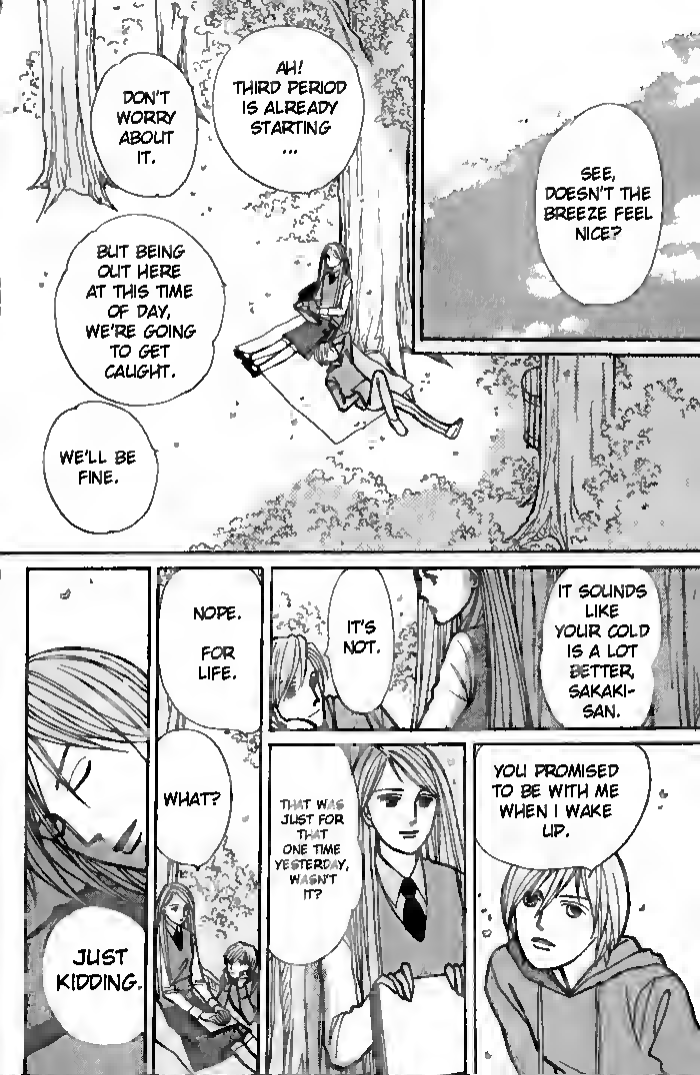
"WE'RE HAVING THE SAME DREAM."
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT DURING THE DREAM.


TICK-TOCK
TICK-TOCK
TICK-TOCK
TICK-TOCK
...AH...

I HAVE TO GO HOME
I DIDN'T REALIZE IT HAD GOTTEN SO LATE!
HELLO?
I'M STAYING WITH MY AUNT.
SHE'LL WORRY IF I'M LATE.
THANKS,
SEE YOU LATER.
BE SURE TO TAKE THE MEDICINE!

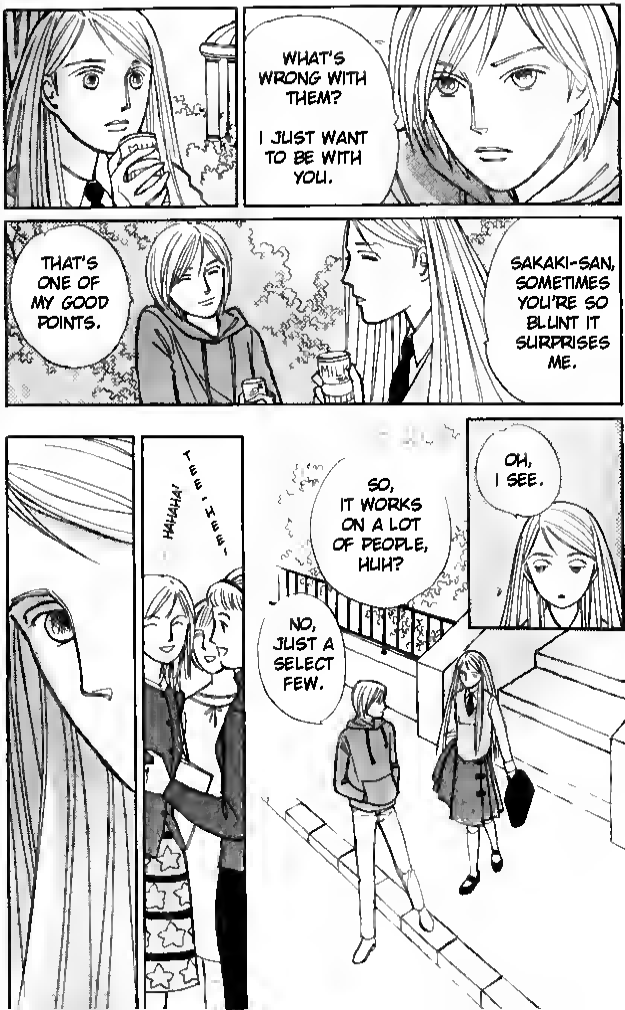
FOR STAYING WITH ME.
I'LL STOP BY TOMORROW MORNING, TOO.
I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOU.

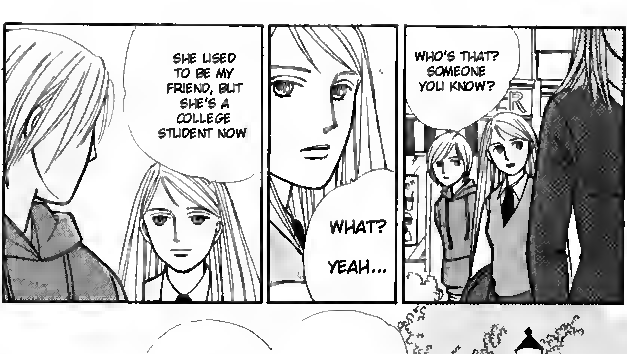
HIGA-SAN!
HERE!
NOMIYA-SAN!
HIGA-SAN? IS SHE OUT TODAY?
"WHISPER-WHISPER"
SAKAKI-SAN AND HIGA-SAN ARE ABSENT TODAY.
NO WAY.
I'M ALREADY LATE AS IT IS.
YOU SHOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT STUFF LIKE THAT.
NO!
LET'S GO FOR A WALK.
IT'S PRETTY NICE OUT.
OKAY, BUT IN THAT CASE YOU SHOULD GO HOME AND GET SOME SLEEP.
WHY --
THANKS AGAIN FOR YESTERDAY
I STILL HAVE A BIT OF A FEVER, WILL YOU TAKE CARE OF ME?


AH! THIRD PERIOD IS ALREADY STARTING ...
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
SEE, DOESN'T THE BREEZE FEEL NICE?
BUT BEING OUT HERE AT THIS TIME OF DAY, WE'RE GOING TO GET CAUGHT.
WE'LL BE FINE.
IT SOUNDS LIKE YOUR COLD IS A LOT BETTER, SAKAKI-SAN.
IT'S NOT.
YOU PROMISED TO BE WITH ME WHEN I WAKE UP.
THAT WAS JUST FOR THAT ONE TIME YESTERDAY, WASN'T IT?
NOPE. FOR LIFE.
WHAT?
JUST KIDDING.

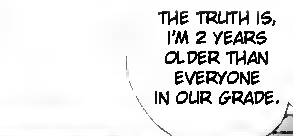
I JUST THOUGHT I'D GO GET SOMETHING TO DRINK.
LET GO SAKAKI-SAN! AH, YOU STARTLED ME!
WHAT A PAIN.
?!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!
ROUGH
DO YOU WANT SOMETHING TOO? WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE SAKAKI-SAN?
COFFEE
OKAY.
I'M JUST GOING TO THAT VENDING MACHINE OVER THERE.
YOU'RE GOING TO COME BACK?

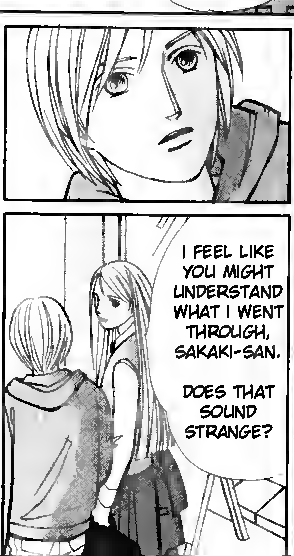
IT WILL BE ALRIGHT.
SHE SAID SHE'D COME RIGHT BACK.
SLOW.
SLOW.
HERE.
CARROT JUICE?
IT WAS ALL OUT OF COFFEE.
CAROTENE IS BETTER THAN CAFFEINE! IF YOU DON'T GET ENOUGH VITAMINS, YOU'LL GET SICK MORE EASILY
WELL, IF I DRINK THIS, WILL YOU SPEND THE REST OF THE DAY WITH ME?
THOSE TERMS SOUND SORT OF SELFISH.


WHAT'S WRONG WITH THEM?
I JUST WANT TO BE WITH YOU.
THAT'S ONE OF MY GOOD POINTS.
SAKAKI-SAN, SOMETIMES YOU'RE SO BLUNT IT SURPRISES ME.
OH, I SEE.
SO, IT WORKS ON A LOT OF PEOPLE, HUH?
NO, JUST A SELECT FEW.
HAHAHA!
HEH HEH~

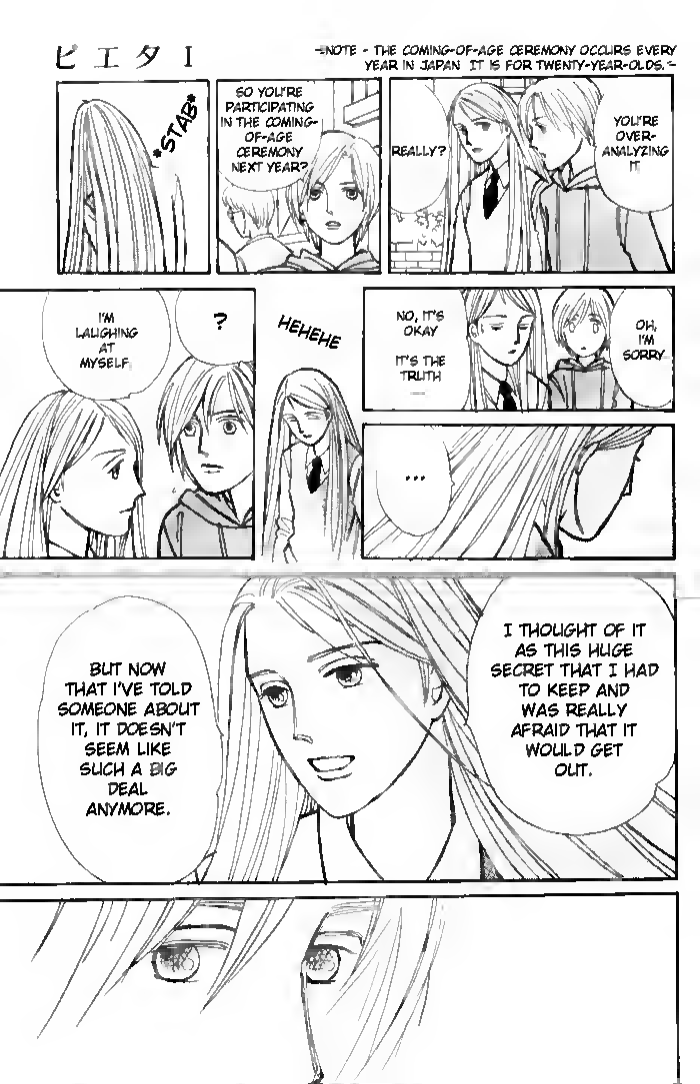

SHE USED TO BE MY FRIEND, BUT SHE'S A COLLEGE STUDENT NOW
WHAT?
YEAH...
WHO'S THAT? SOMEONE YOU KNOW?


I'M BEHIND IN SCHOOL.
THE TRUTH IS, I'M 2 YEARS OLDER THAN EVERYONE IN OUR GRADE.



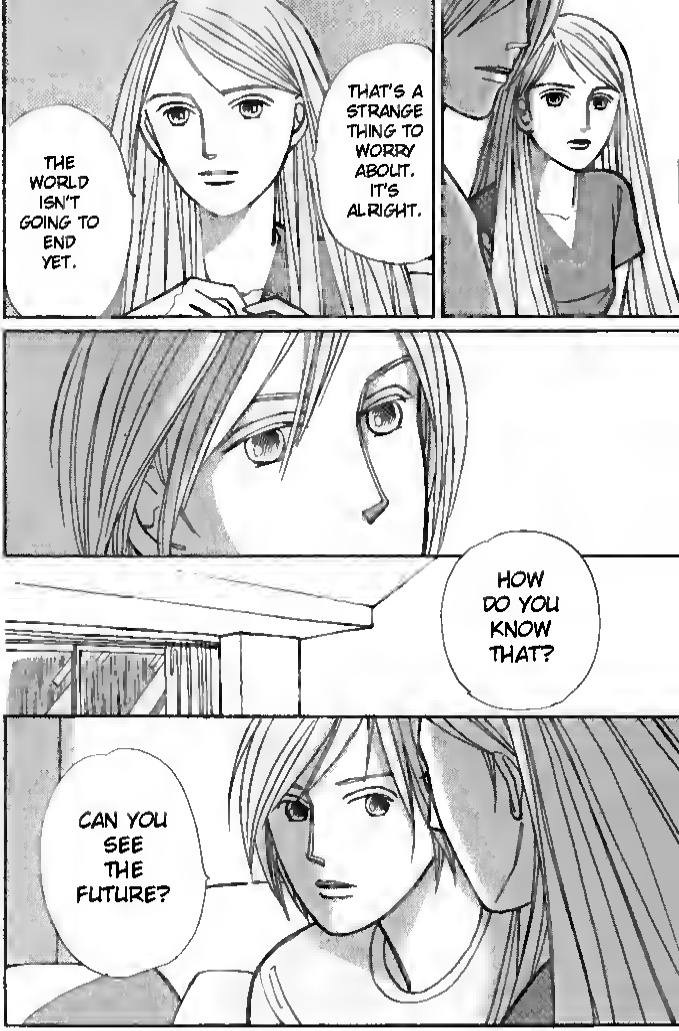

I FEEL LIKE YOU MIGHT UNDERSTAND WHAT I WENT THROUGH, SAKAKI-SAN.
DOES THAT SOUND STRANGE?

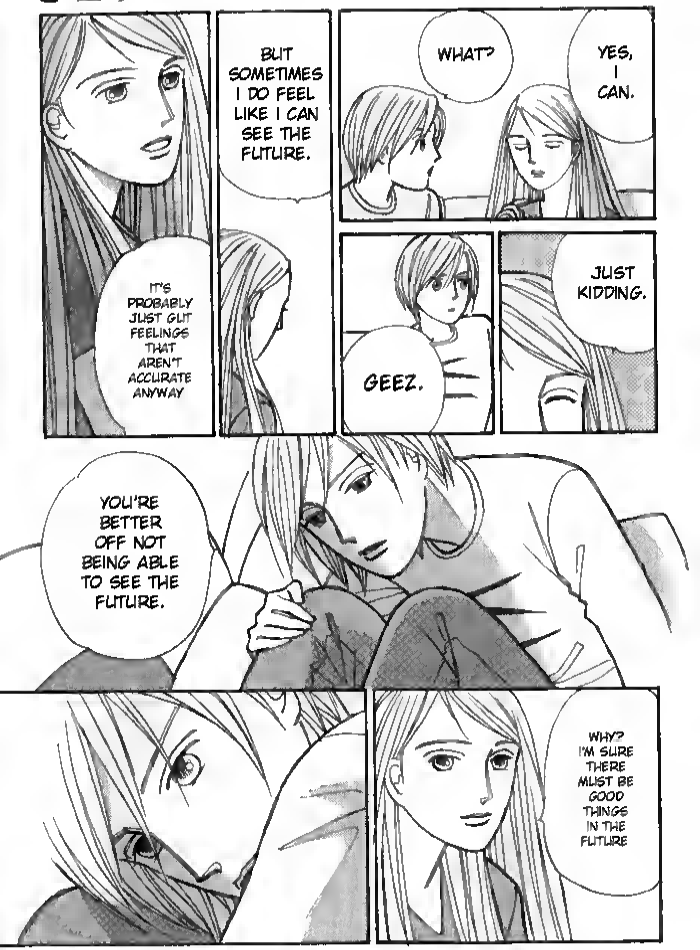
WHEN I WAS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL, I HAD SOME MENTAL PROBLEMS THAT KEPT ME FROM LEAVING THE HOUSE FOR A WHILE.
I WENT TO A LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL AT FIRST, BUT THERE WERE A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO KNEW ABOUT ME AND I FELT INFERIOR TO THEM SO IT DIDN'T REALLY GO WELL.
BECAUSE OF THAT I APPLIED TO THE SCHOOL HERE

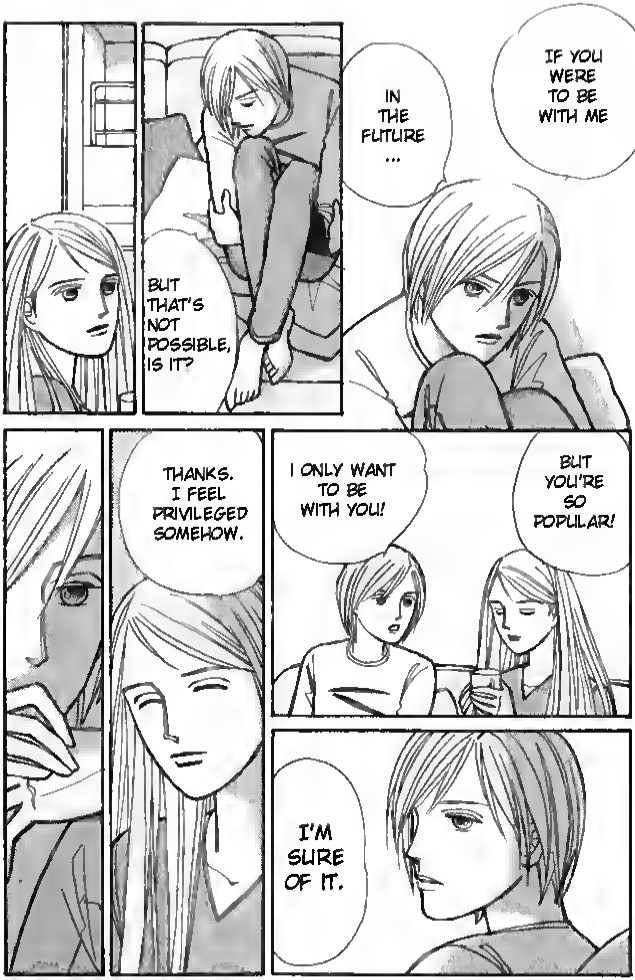

~NOTE - THE COMING-OF-AGE CEREMONY OCCURS EVERY YEAR IN JAPAN. IT IS FOR TWENTY-YEAR-OLDS.~
*STAB*
SO YOU'RE PARTICIPATING IN THE COMING-OF-AGE CEREMONY NEXT YEAR?
REALLY?
YOU'RE OVER-ANALYZING IT.
I'M LAUGHING AT MYSELF.
?
HEHEHE
NO, IT'S OKAY
IT'S THE TRUTH
OH, I'M SORRY.
...
I THOUGHT OF IT AS THIS HUGE SECRET THAT I HAD TO KEEP AND WAS REALLY AFRAID THAT IT WOULD GET OUT.
BUT NOW THAT I'VE TOLD SOMEONE ABOUT IT, IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE SUCH A BIG DEAL ANYMORE.

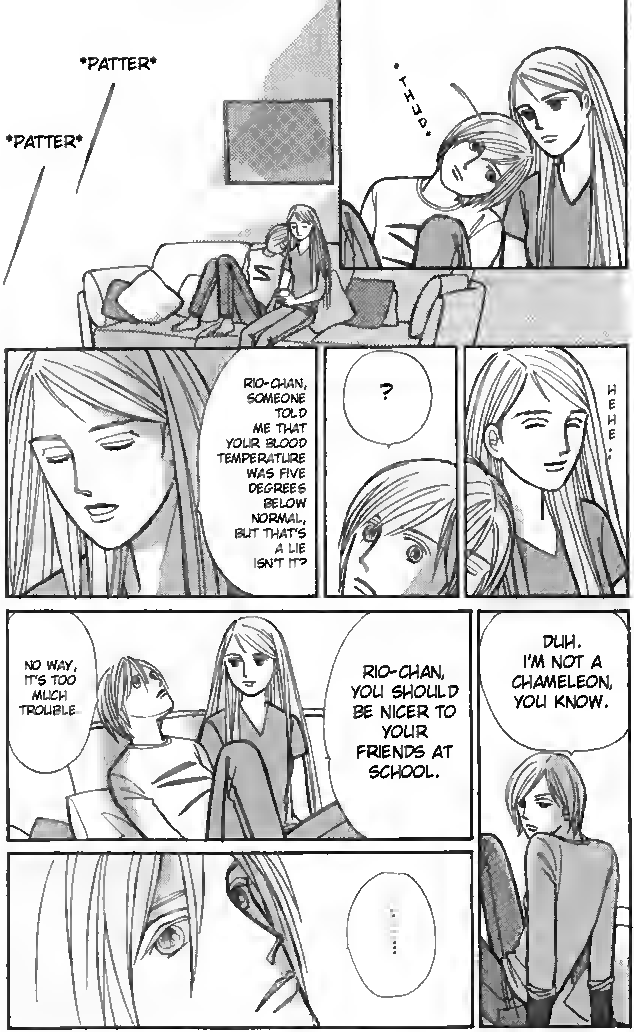
BUT... THOSE TWO THINGS AREN'T REALLY CONNECTED AT ALL.
THAT'S RIGHT. SO IT SHOULDN'T MATTER IF YOU JUST SKIP CLASSES TODAY.
BUT I DRANK THE CARROT JUICE LIKE YOU ASKED!
IF I DRINK CARROT JUICE EVERY DAY, YOU'LL HAVE TO SPEND EVERY DAY WITH ME.
I WON'T.
OKAY, I GET IT SO YOU CAN LET GO OF MY HAND
LATELY, THERE HAVE BEEN STORM WARNINGS THROUGHOUT THIS PREFECTURE. IN KAWAZOE IN PARTICULAR, PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TOLD TO EXERCISE CAUTION.

HEREAFTER, A LARGE AMOUNT OF PRECIPITATION IS EXPECTED IN ALL AREAS, ON THE ORDER OF 10 TO THE 3RD POWER.
I HATE RAIN. AND THE SOUND OF RAIN.
I DON'T HAVE ANY HAPPY MEMORIES OF RAINY DAYS.
I BET IT WILL BE RAINING THE DAY THE WORLD ENDS.

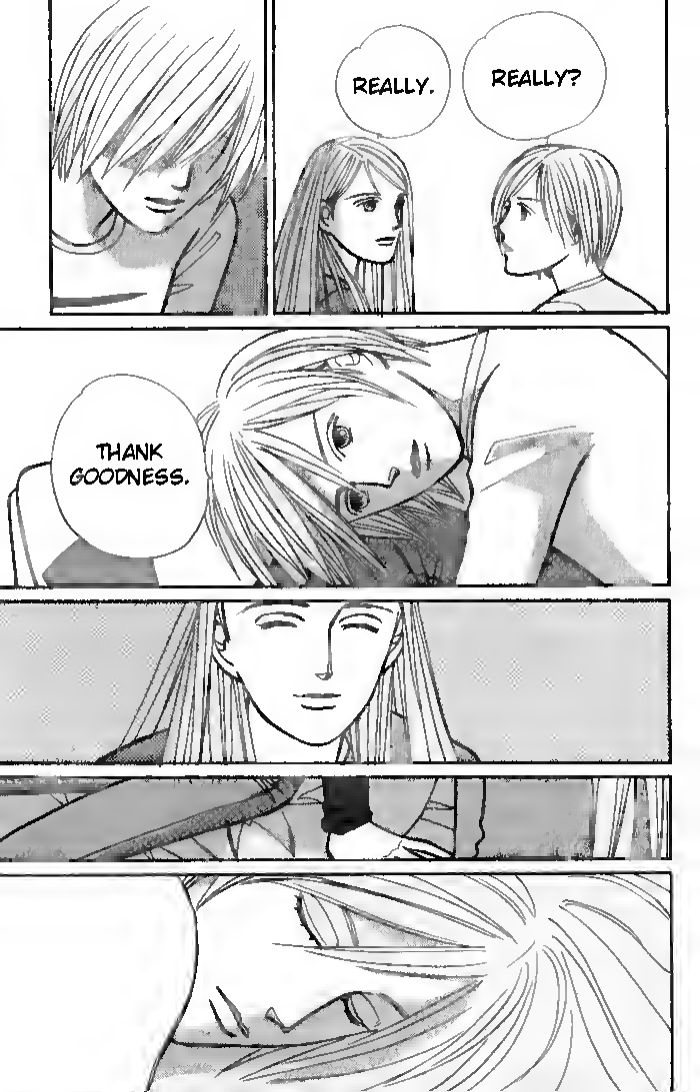

THE WORLD ISN'T GOING TO END YET.
THAT'S A STRANGE THING TO WORRY ABOUT. IT'S ALRIGHT.
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?
CAN YOU SEE THE FUTURE?

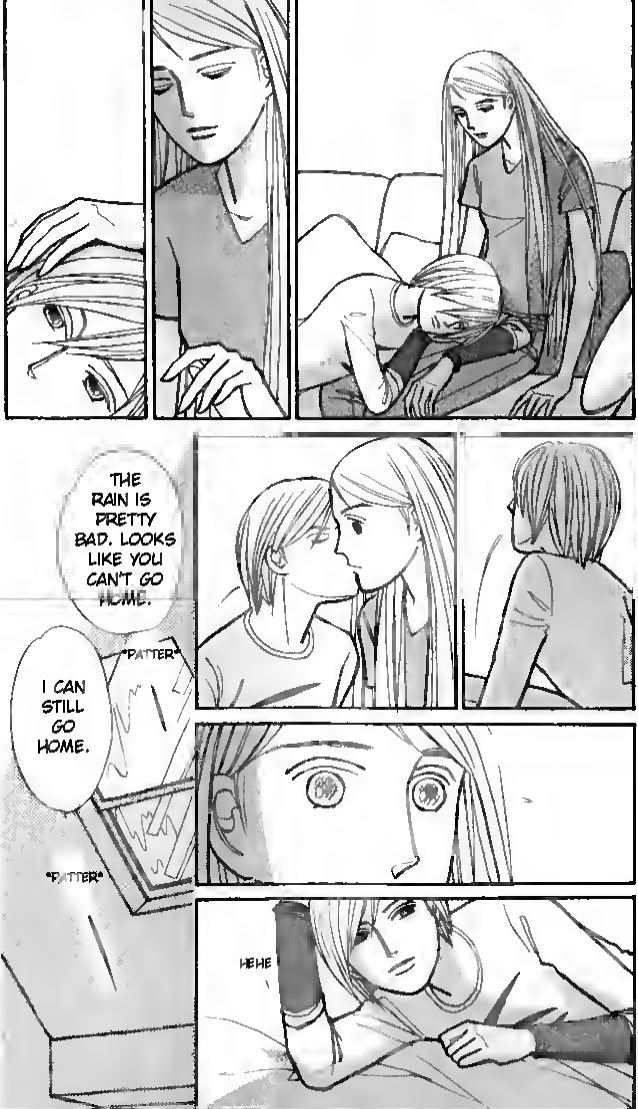

BUT SOMETIMES I DO FEEL LIKE I CAN SEE THE FUTURE.
IT'S PROBABLY JUST GUT FEELINGS THAT AREN'T ACCURATE ANYWAY
WHAT?
YES, I CAN.
GEEZ.
JUST KIDDING.
YOU'RE BETTER OFF NOT BEING ABLE TO SEE THE FUTURE.
WHY? I'M SURE THERE MUST BE GOOD THINGS IN THE FUTURE

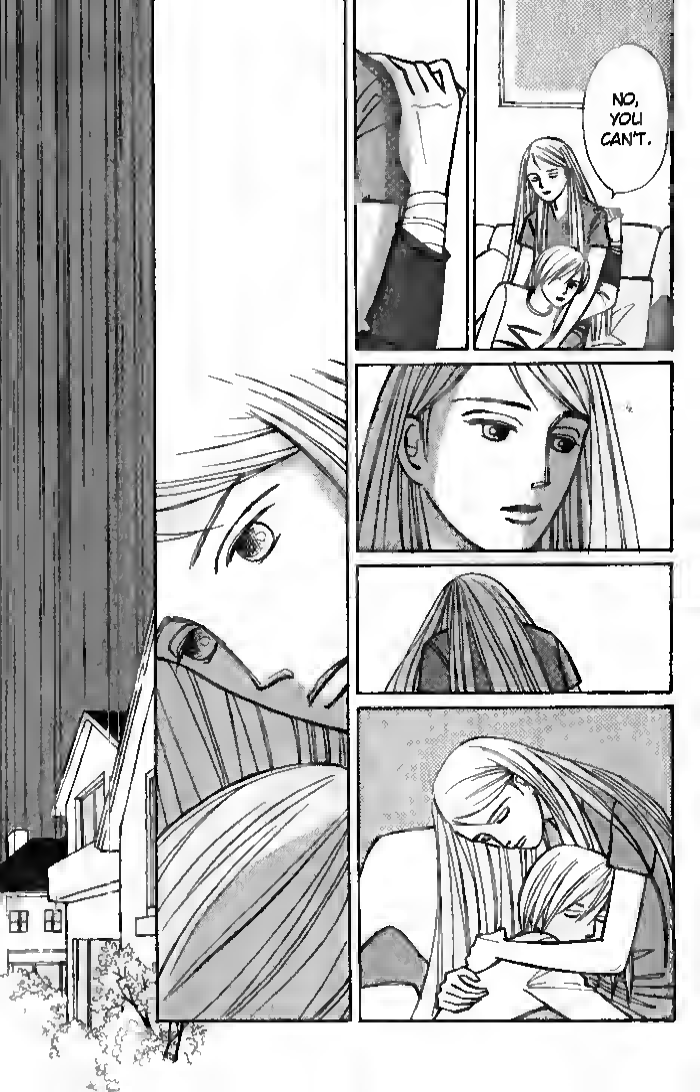

IF YOU WERE TO BE WITH ME
IN THE FUTURE ...
BUT THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE, IS IT?
BUT YOU'RE SO POPULAR!
I ONLY WANT TO BE WITH YOU!
THANKS. I FEEL PRIVILEGED SOMEHOW.
I'M SURE OF IT.


*PATTER*
*PATTER*
*PEEL*
RIO-CHAN, SOMEONE TOLD ME THAT YOUR BLOOD TEMPERATURE WAS FIVE DEGREES BELOW NORMAL, BUT THAT'S A LIE ISN'T IT?
?
HEHE.
NO WAY, IT'S TOO MUCH TROUBLE.
RIO-CHAN, YOU SHOULD BE NICER TO YOUR FRIENDS AT SCHOOL.
DUH. I'M NOT A CHAMELEON, YOU KNOW.
.....

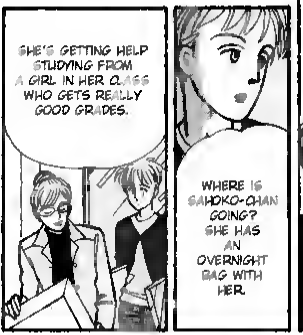
DO YOU LIKE NICE PEOPLE?
YEAH.
THEN I'LL DO IT.
SO LIKE ME A LOT MORE, OKAY?
OKAY.

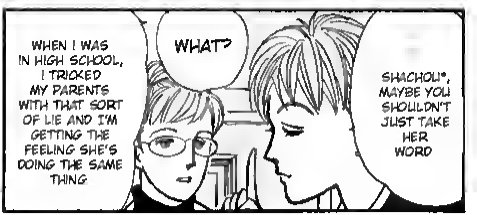

REALLY.
REALLY?
THANK GOODNESS.


THE RAIN IS PRETTY BAD. LOOKS LIKE YOU CAN'T GO HOME.
I CAN STILL GO HOME.
*PATTER*
*PATTER*
HEHE

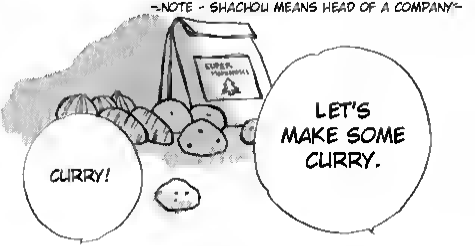

NO, YOU CAN'T.

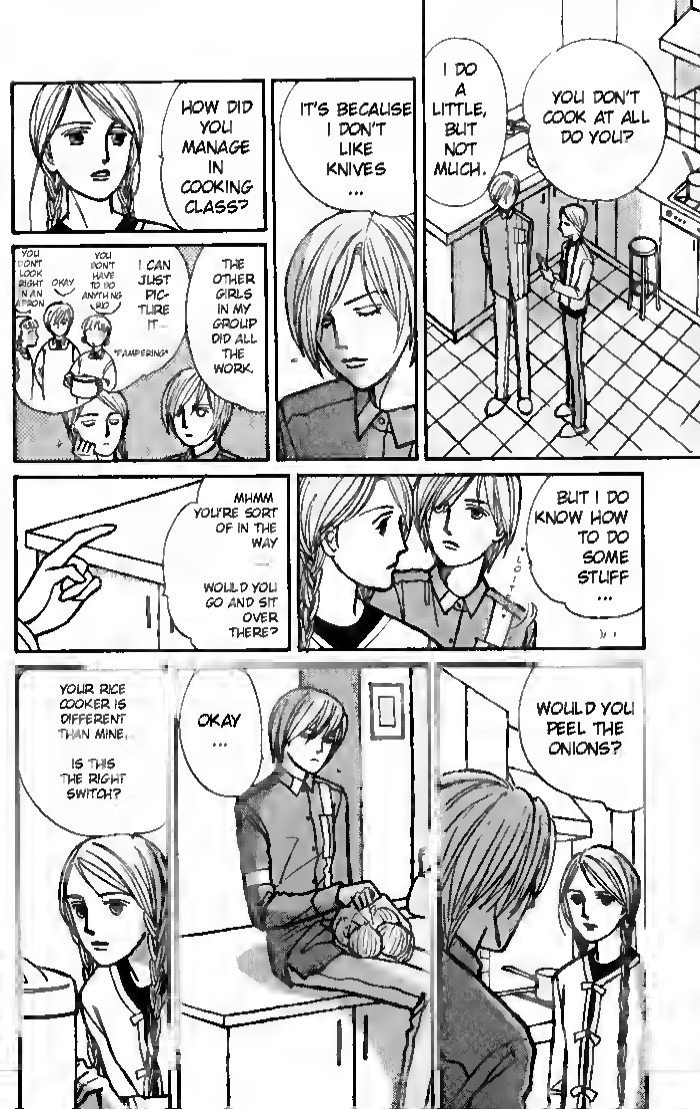
OH, MRS. SAKAKI.
GOOD AFTERNOON.
GOOD AFTERNOON.
REALLY? THAT'S INCREDIBLE!
BUT DOESN'T IT TAKE A LOT OF TIME?
YOU EVEN MAKE ALL YOUR SNACKS BY HAND DON'T YOU, SAKAKI -SAN?
THERE WAS A TIME I WAS CRAZY ABOUT THOSE AS WELL, BUT IT DIDN'T LAST LONG
YES. I'VE COMPARED THEM TO SOME OTHER KINDS, AND THESE ARE THE ONES I TRUST THE MOST
ARE THOSE THE ORGANIC VEGETABLES THAT YOU MAIL-ORDERED?
IT'S BECAUSE OF THAT THAT I FEEL I HAVE TO DO WHATEVER I CAN FOR MY CHILD
THAT'S ABOUT THE ONLY THING THAT YOU CAN DO TO INSURE YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE, ISN'T IT?
WELL, THAT CAN'T REALLY BE HELPED. IT'S A PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITY, YOU KNOW. DOESN'T IT MAKE YOU UNEASY TO GIVE A CHILD FOOD IF YOU DON'T KNOW HOW OR WHERE IT WAS MADE? IT CERTAINLY DOES FOR ME
YOU'RE SUCH A GOOD MOTHER.
WHAT A GREAT PERSON YOU ARE
I COULD NEVER BE LIKE THAT.
WELL, HAVING CHILDREN IS MY DREAM.


I'M OFF, SEE YOU LATER!
WHERE IS SAHOKO-CHAN GOING? SHE HAS AN OVERNIGHT BAG WITH HER.
SHE'S GETTING HELP STUDYING FROM A GIRL IN HER CLASS WHO GETS REALLY GOOD GRADES.


SHACHOU*, MAYBE YOU SHOULDN'T JUST TAKE HER WORD
WHAT?
WHEN I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL, I TRICKED MY PARENTS WITH THAT SORT OF LIE AND I'M GETTING THE FEELING SHE'S DOING THE SAME THING

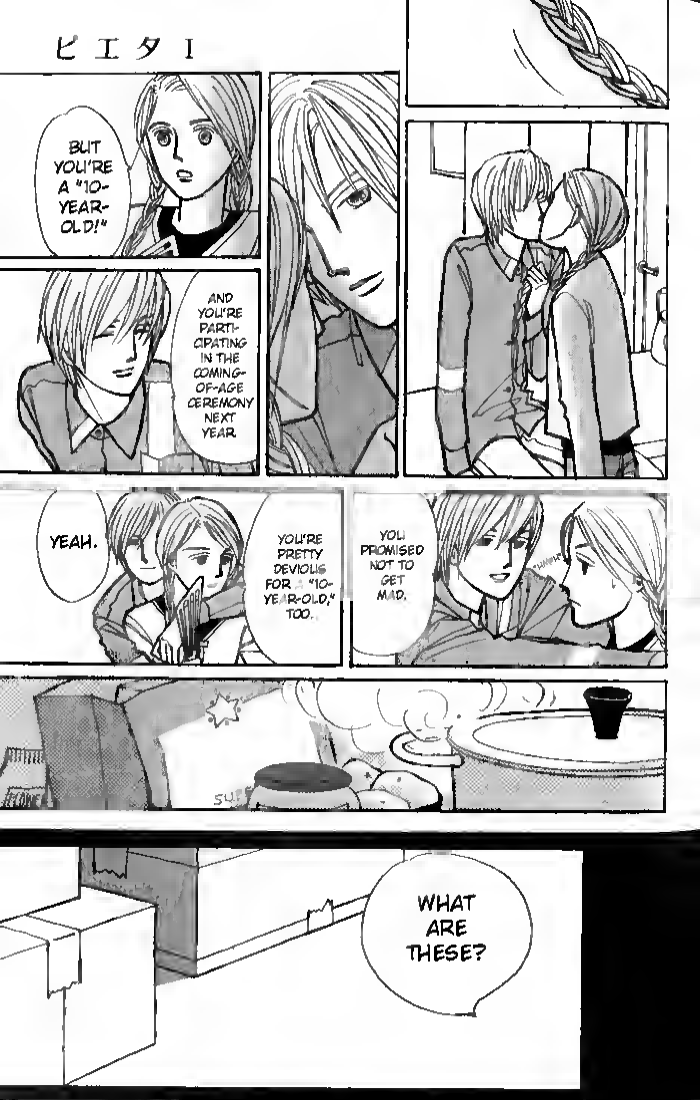
*NOTE - SHACHOU MEANS HEAD OF A COMPANY*

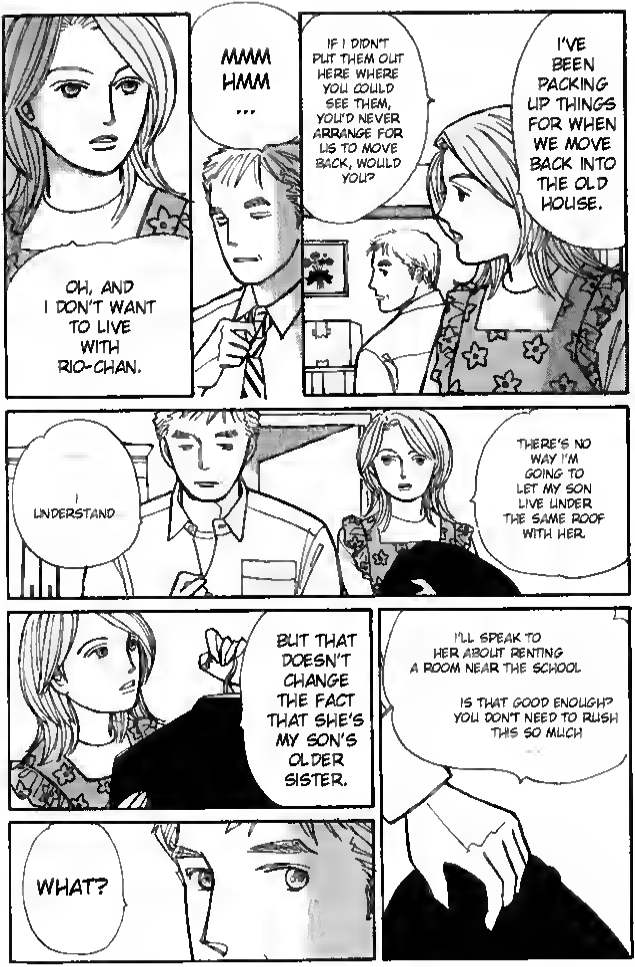


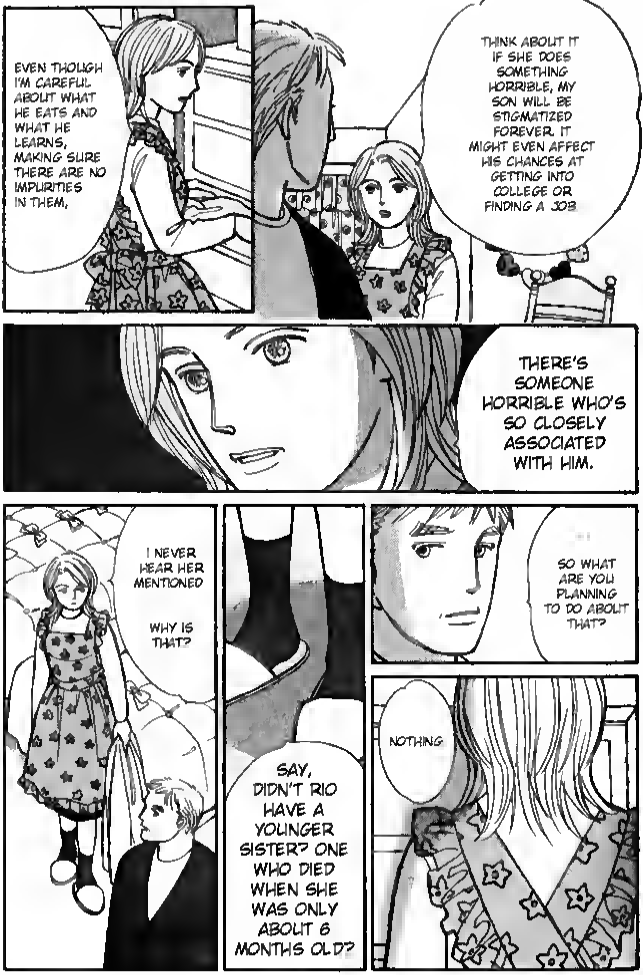

I DO A LITTLE, BUT NOT MUCH.
YOU DON'T COOK AT ALL DO YOU?
IT'S BECAUSE I DON'T LIKE KNIVES ...
HOW DID YOU MANAGE IN COOKING CLASS?
THE OTHER GIRLS IN MY GROUP DID ALL THE WORK.
I CAN JUST PICTURE IT—
YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING BAD
OKAY
YOU DON'T LOOK RIGHT IN AN APRON
*TAMPERING*
BUT I DO KNOW HOW TO DO SOME STUFF ...
MHMM YOU'RE SORT OF IN THE WAY — WOULD YOU GO AND SIT OVER THERE?
WOULD YOU PEEL THE ONIONS?
OKAY ...
YOUR RICE COOKER IS DIFFERENT THAN MINE. IS THIS THE RIGHT SWITCH?

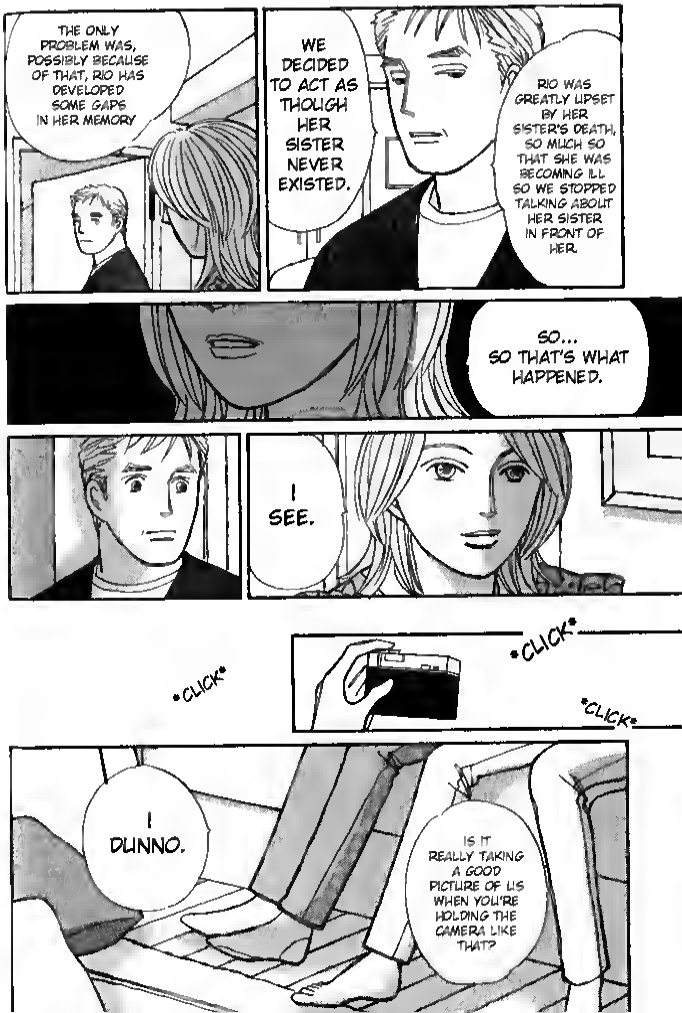
...
WE ONLY NEEDED ONE OR TWO. NOW IT'LL BE ONION CURRY!
YOU PEELED *ALL* OF THE ONIONS, RIO-CHAN?
COOKING IS FUN!
I'M NOT MAD
I WAS JUST POINTING OUT YOUR MISTAKE
YOU'RE MAD AT ME ...
YOU LOOK SAD.
HAHA
YEAH.
DO YOU HATE IT WHEN PEOPLE GET MAD AT YOU?
I'LL TRY NOT TO GET ANGRY AT YOU, THEN.

THERE ARE GAPS IN MY MEMORY
I DON'T REALLY REMEMBER MUCH FROM WHEN I WAS 10 YEARS OLD...
A 10-YEAR-OLD
A 10-YEAR-OLD?!
TOSSS
SOMETIMES YOU ACT LIKE A 10-YEAR-OLD CHILD, RIO-CHAN
WITHIN THREE BRAID-LENGTHS.
HOW CLOSE?
BESIDES, WE SHOULD STAY CLOSE TO EACH OTHER WHEN WE'RE TOGETHER LIKE THIS
D-ZO DOZO.
AT THIS TIME OF DAY IT HAS TO BE EITHER THE NEWSPAPER OR EVANGELISTS.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
SOMEONE'S
THERE ARE SOME THINGS WE CAN DO.
THEN WE CAN'T DO ANY-THING, CAN WE?

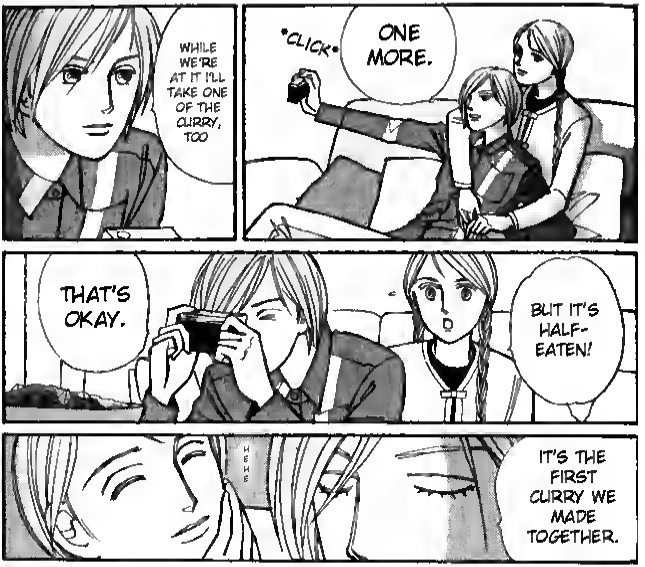

BUT YOU'RE A "10-YEAR-OLD!"
AND YOU'RE PARTICIPATING IN THE COMING-OF-AGE CEREMONY NEXT YEAR.
YEAH.
YOU'RE PRETTY DEVIOUS FOR A "10-YEAR-OLD," TOO.
YOU PROMISED NOT TO GET MAD.
WHAT ARE THESE?


I'VE BEEN PACKING UP THINGS FOR WHEN WE MOVE BACK INTO THE OLD HOUSE.
IF I DIDN'T PUT THEM OUT HERE WHERE YOU COULD SEE THEM, YOU'D NEVER ARRANGE FOR US TO MOVE BACK, WOULD YOU?
MMM HMM ...
OH, AND I DON'T WANT TO LIVE WITH RIO-CHAN.
THERE'S NO WAY I'M GOING TO LET MY SON LIVE UNDER THE SAME ROOF WITH HER.
I UNDERSTAND
BUT THAT DOESN'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT SHE'S MY SON'S OLDER SISTER.
I'LL SPEAK TO HER ABOUT RENTING A ROOM NEAR THE SCHOOL
IS THAT GOOD ENOUGH? YOU DON'T NEED TO RUSH THIS SO MUCH
WHAT?


EVEN THOUGH I'M CAREFUL ABOUT WHAT HE EATS AND WHAT HE LEARNS, MAKING SURE THERE ARE NO IMPURITIES IN THEM,
THINK ABOUT IT IF SHE DOES SOMETHING HORRIBLE, MY SON WILL BE STIGMATIZED FOREVER. IT MIGHT EVEN AFFECT HIS CHANCES AT GETTING INTO COLLEGE OR FINDING A JOB.
THERE'S SOMEONE HORRIBLE WHO'S SO CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH HIM.
I NEVER HEAR HER MENTIONED
WHY IS THAT?
SAY, DIDN'T RIO HAVE A YOUNGER SISTER? ONE WHO DIED WHEN SHE WAS ONLY ABOUT 6 MONTHS OLD?
SO WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING TO DO ABOUT THAT?
NOTHING


THE ONLY PROBLEM WAS, POSSIBLY BECAUSE OF THAT, RIO HAS DEVELOPED SOME GAPS IN HER MEMORY
WE DECIDED TO ACT AS THOUGH HER SISTER NEVER EXISTED.
RIO WAS GREATLY UPSET BY HER SISTER'S DEATH, SO MUCH SO THAT SHE WAS BECOMING ILL SO WE STOPPED TALKING ABOUT HER SISTER IN FRONT OF HER.
SO... SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED.
I SEE.
*CLICK*
*CLICK*
*CLICK*
I DUNNO.
IS IT REALLY TAKING A GOOD PICTURE OF US WHEN YOU'RE HOLDING THE CAMERA LIKE THAT?

# ピエタ I




THAT WAVE MUST BE COMING HERE
FROM FARTHER AWAY THAN A MEMORY,

COMING HERE
TO IMMERSE US
IN THAT WATER.

PIETA #2 -END-

# ピエタ

-pietà-

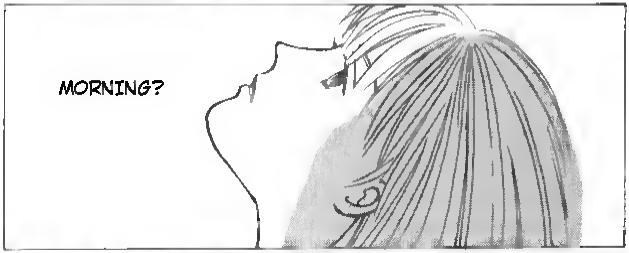
## #3

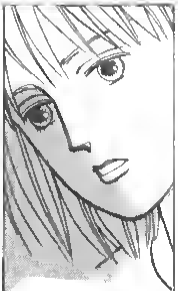
I
WAKE UP
IN A
WHITE
BOX.

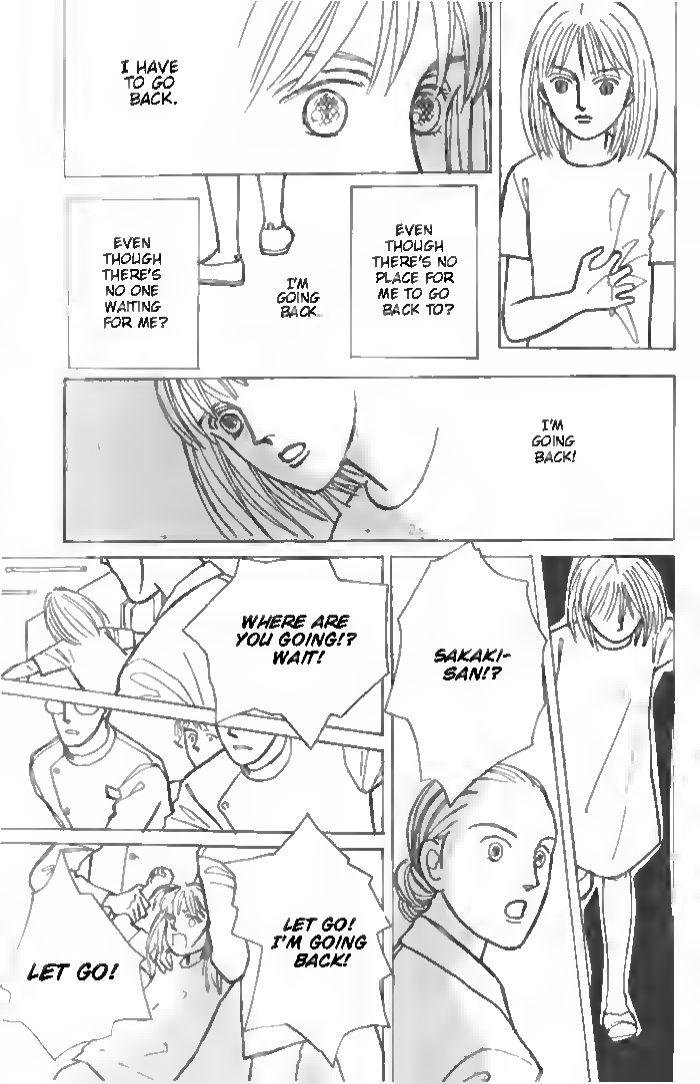
A VESSEL LEFT ABANDONED AND FORGOTTEN AT THE EDGE OF SPACE.

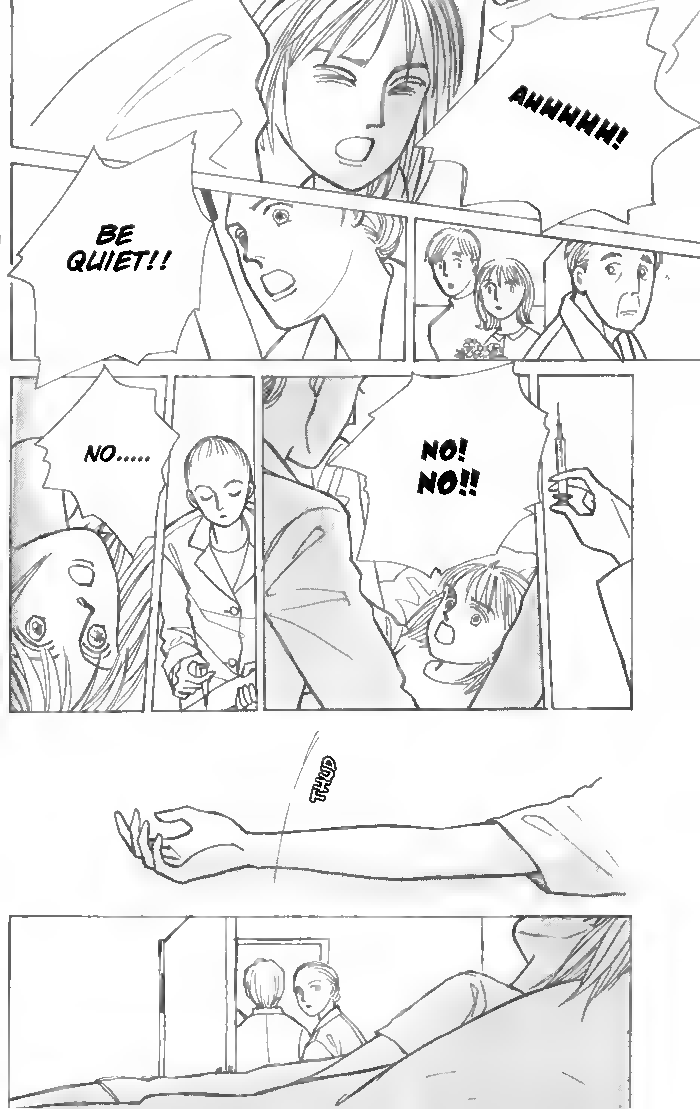
A MORNING OF THE LAST REMAINING CREW MEMBER ON

LINOLEUM FLOORS, PLASTER WALLS.



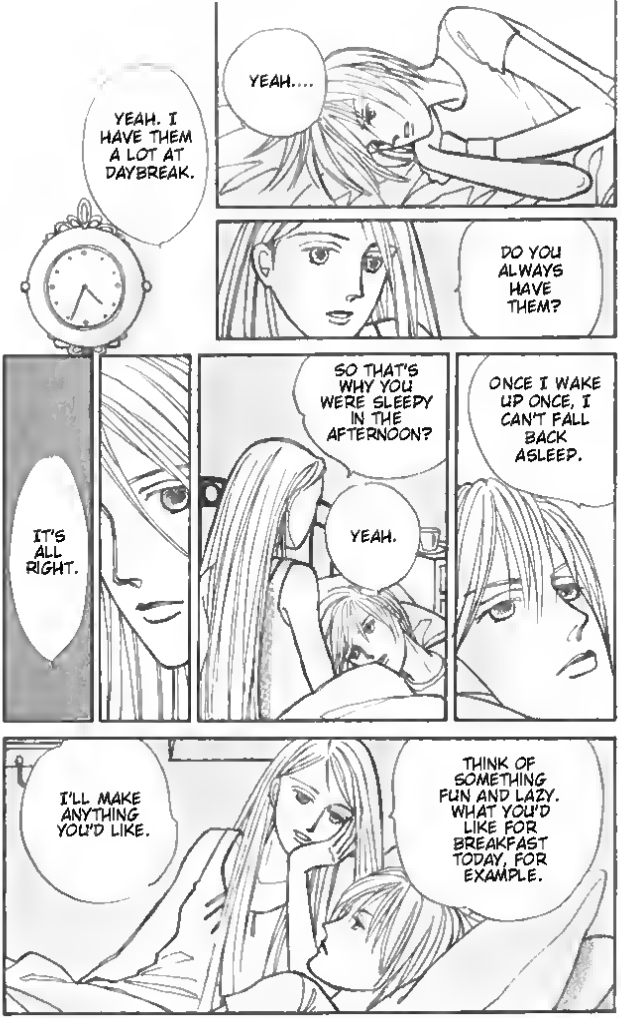



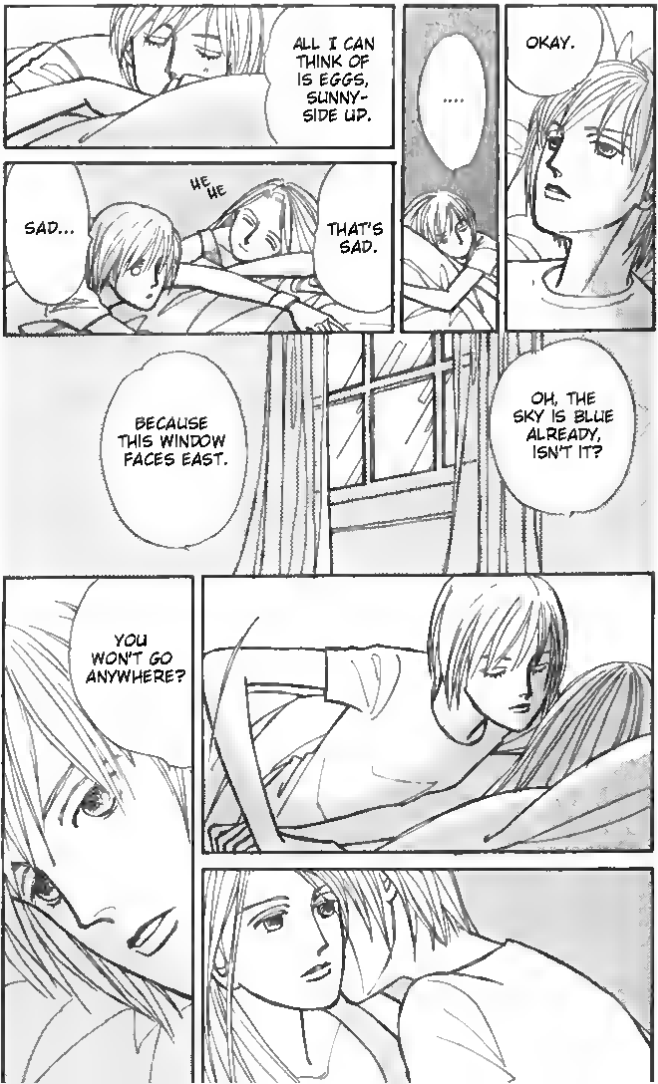

I HAVE TO GO BACK.
EVEN THOUGH THERE'S NO ONE WAITING FOR ME?
I'M GOING BACK.
EVEN THOUGH THERE'S NO PLACE FOR ME TO GO BACK TO?
I'M GOING BACK!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING!? WAIT!
SAKAKI-SAN!?
LET GO!
LET GO! I'M GOING BACK!

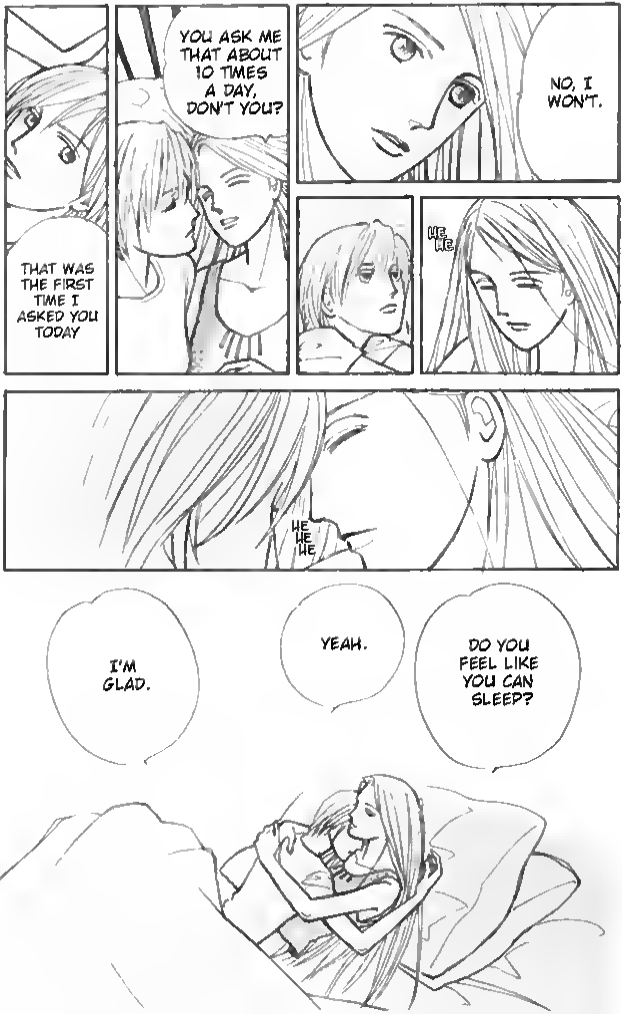

AHHHHH!
BE QUIET!!
NO.....
NO! NO!!
THUD

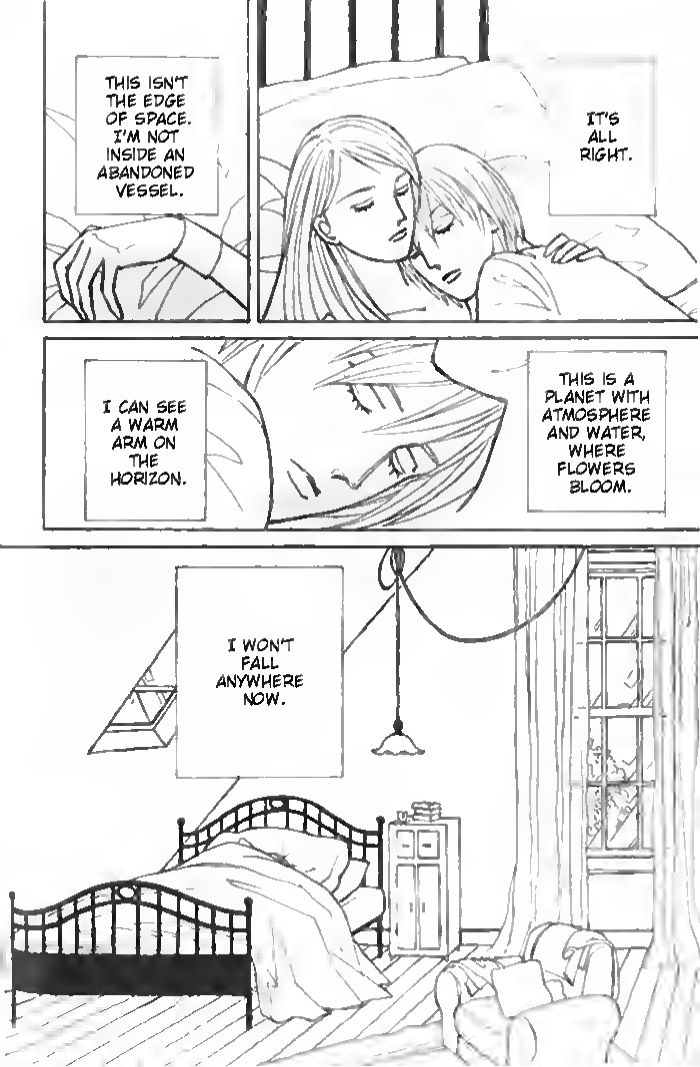
HELP ME...
twinn
wobble
WOBBLE
Ahhhhhhhhhh!

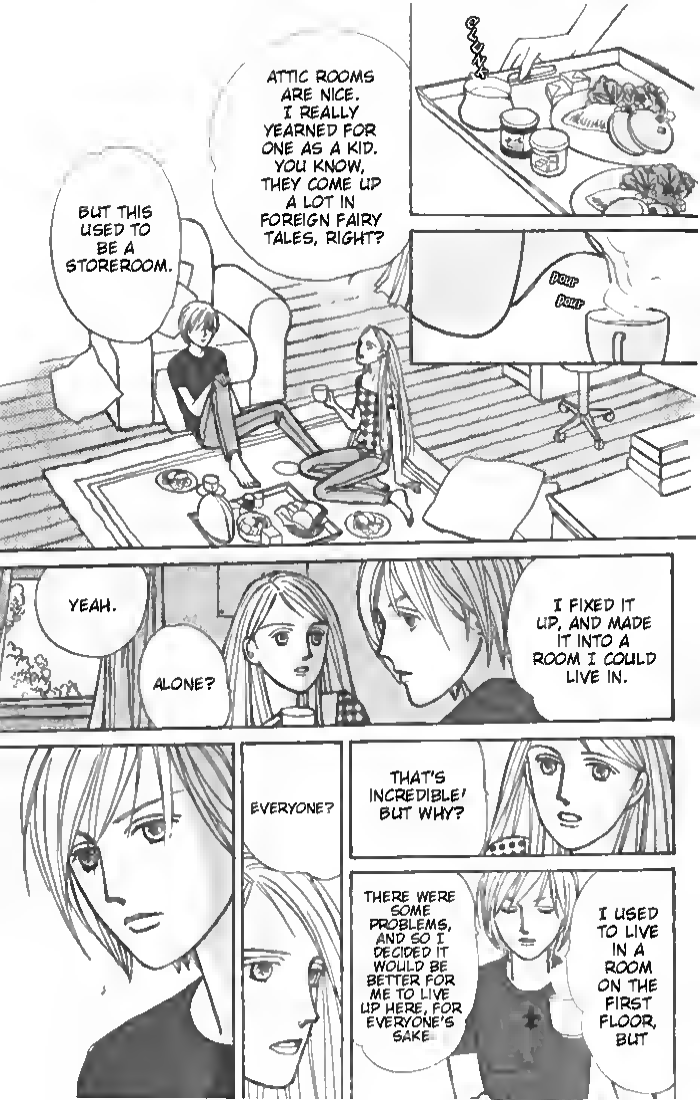
!!
WHAT'S WRONG, RIO-CHAN?
YOU'RE SHAKING.
DID YOU HAVE A BAD DREAM?

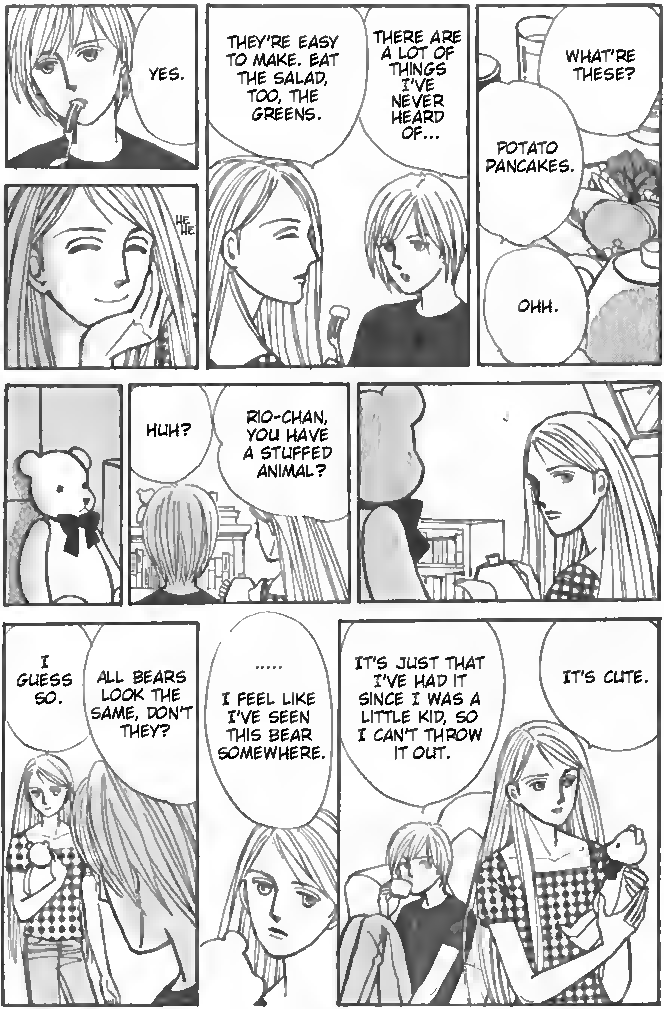

YEAH....
YEAH. I HAVE THEM A LOT AT DAYBREAK.
DO YOU ALWAYS HAVE THEM?
ONCE I WAKE UP ONCE, I CAN'T FALL BACK ASLEEP.
SO THAT'S WHY YOU WERE SLEEPY IN THE AFTERNOON?
YEAH.
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
THINK OF SOMETHING FUN AND LAZY. WHAT YOU'D LIKE FOR BREAKFAST TODAY, FOR EXAMPLE.
I'LL MAKE ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE.

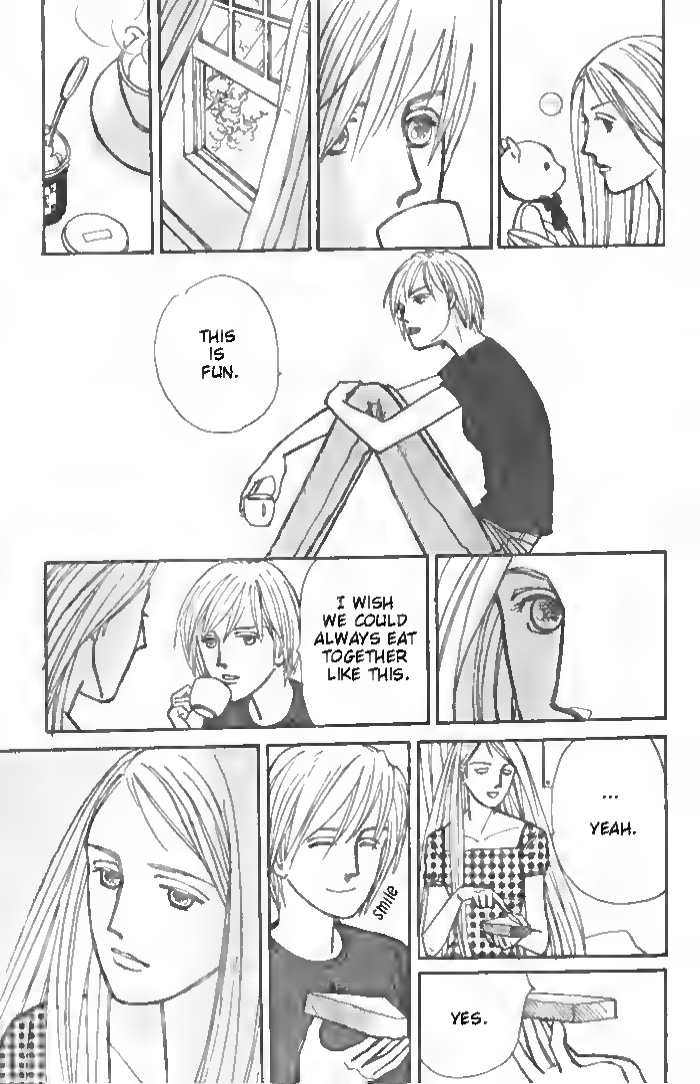

ALL I CAN THINK OF IS EGGS, SUNNY-SIDE UP.
....
OKAY.
HE HE
SAD...
THAT'S SAD.
BECAUSE THIS WINDOW FACES EAST.
OH, THE SKY IS BLUE ALREADY, ISN'T IT?
YOU WON'T GO ANYWHERE?


THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I ASKED YOU TODAY
YOU ASK ME THAT ABOUT 10 TIMES A DAY, DON'T YOU?
NO, I WON'T.
HE HE
HE HE HE
I'M GLAD.
YEAH.
DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU CAN SLEEP?


THIS ISN'T THE EDGE OF SPACE. I'M NOT INSIDE AN ABANDONED VESSEL.
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
I CAN SEE A WARM ARM ON THE HORIZON.
THIS IS A PLANET WITH ATMOSPHERE AND WATER, WHERE FLOWERS BLOOM.
I WON'T FALL ANYWHERE NOW.

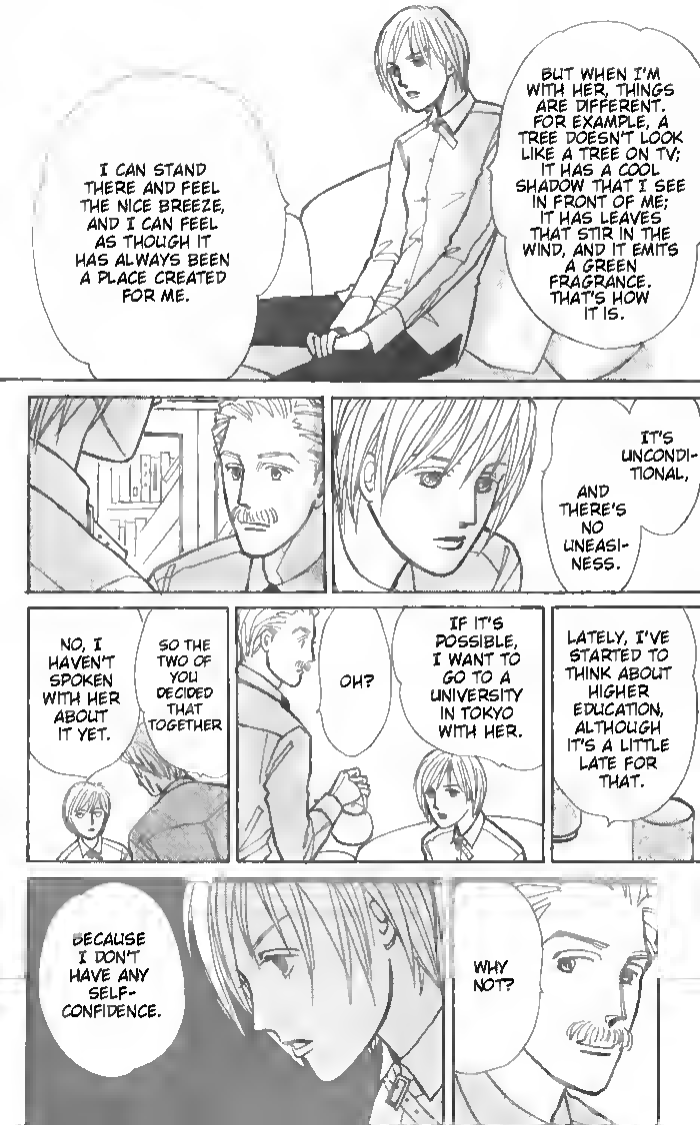

ATTIC ROOMS ARE NICE. I REALLY YEARNED FOR ONE AS A KID. YOU KNOW, THEY COME UP A LOT IN FOREIGN FAIRY TALES, RIGHT?
BUT THIS USED TO BE A STOREROOM.
GRUNK
PURR PURR
YEAH.
ALONE?
I FIXED IT UP, AND MADE IT INTO A ROOM I COULD LIVE IN.
EVERYONE?
THAT'S INCREDIBLE! BUT WHY?
THERE WERE SOME PROBLEMS, AND SO I DECIDED IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR ME TO LIVE UP HERE, FOR EVERYONE'S SAKE.
I USED TO LIVE IN A ROOM ON THE FIRST FLOOR, BUT

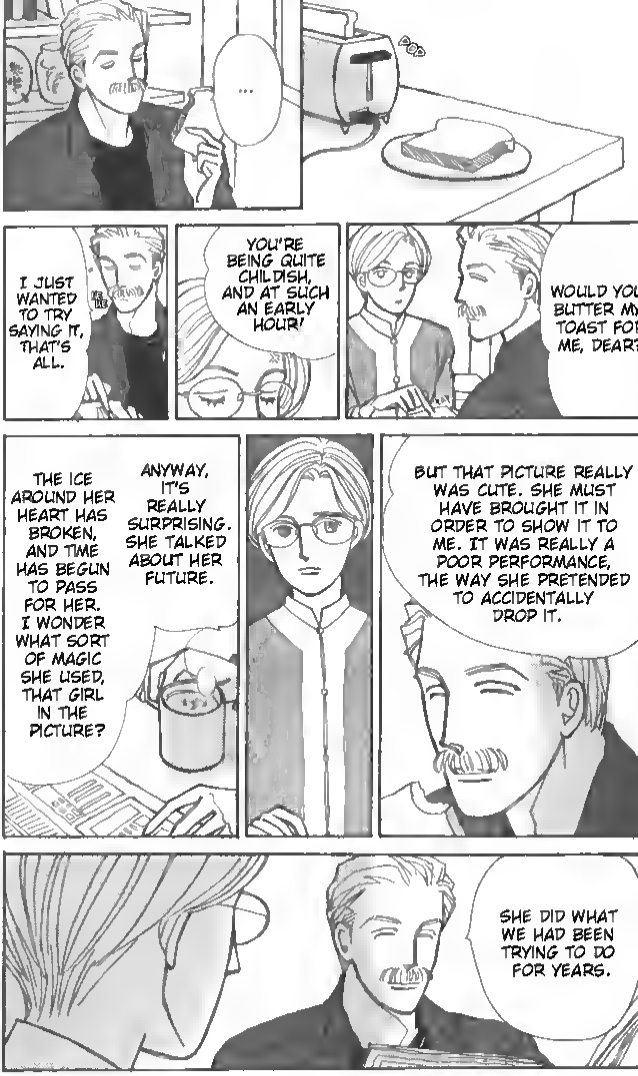

YES.
THEY'RE EASY TO MAKE. EAT THE SALAD, TOO, THE GREENS.
THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS I'VE NEVER HEARD OF...
WHAT'RE THESE?
POTATO PANCAKES.
OHH.
HE HE
HUH?
RIO-CHAN, YOU HAVE A STUFFED ANIMAL?
I GUESS SO.
ALL BEARS LOOK THE SAME, DON'T THEY?
.....
I FEEL LIKE I'VE SEEN THIS BEAR SOMEWHERE.
IT'S JUST THAT I'VE HAD IT SINCE I WAS A LITTLE KID, SO I CAN'T THROW IT OUT.
IT'S CUTE.


THIS IS FUN.
I WISH WE COULD ALWAYS EAT TOGETHER LIKE THIS.
...
YEAH.
Smile
YES.

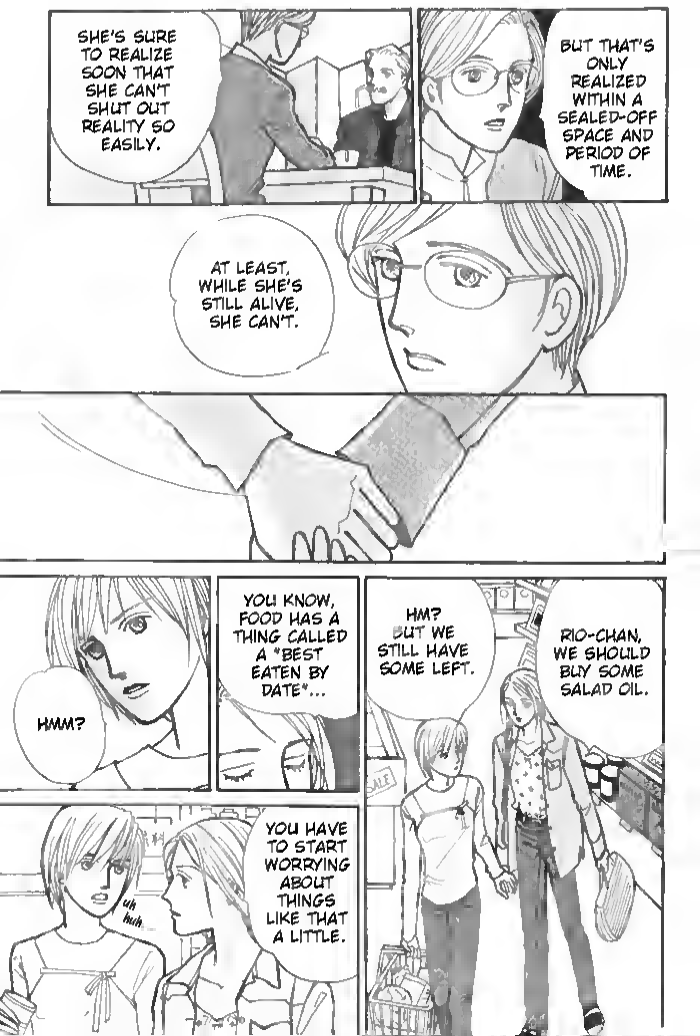
IT FEELS LIKE YOU'VE CHANGED SOMEHOW. YOUR COLOR IS BETTER TOO.
....
I HADN'T REALLY NOTICED.
I SEE. MAYBE IT WAS JUST MY IMAGINATION. BUT I'M GLAD THAT YOU LOOK SO WELL. GO AHEAD.
HM? SOMETHING FELL. A PICTURE?
thump
whoosh

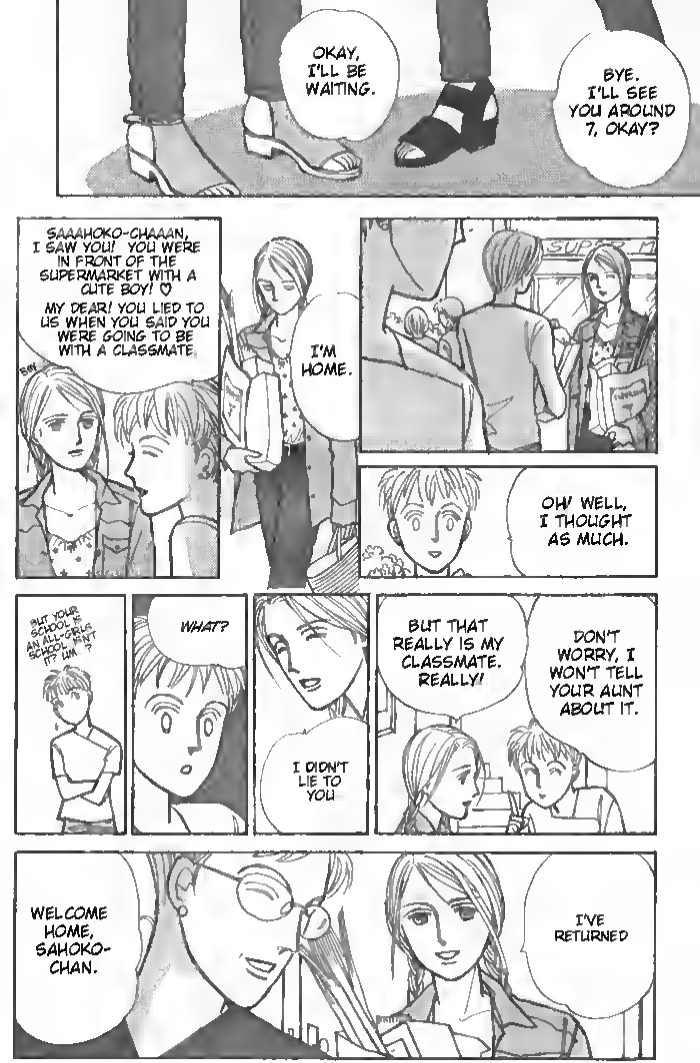
SHE'S QUITE A LOOKER, ISN'T SHE? SHE SEEMS TO RESEMBLE YOU A BIT, SAKAKI-KUN.
YOU SEEM TO BE QUITE CLOSE. I DIDN'T KNOW.
HM' BUT, YES, IT'S GOOD TO HAVE A GOOD FRIEND.
A CLASSMATE. HIGA-SAN.
A FRIEND?
WELL, ISN'T THAT SOMETHING!
SHE BUTTERS MY TOAST FOR ME.
MUM MUM
SHE LOOKS VERY KIND.
NO, I DON'T MEAN HER PHYSICAL FEATURES, I MEAN HER BEARING SOMEHOW...
I DON'T THINK SHE DOES.
UP UNTIL NOW, IT WAS AS THOUGH NO MATTER WHERE I WENT, OR WHAT I LOOKED AT,
THERE WAS A WALL OF GLASS BETWEEN ME AND THE REST OF THE WORLD, LIKE I WAS SEEING IT THROUGH A TV SCREEN.
I FEEL LIKE I UNDERSTAND NOW. THAT I'M HERE, AND I'M CONNECTED TO THIS WORLD.


I CAN STAND THERE AND FEEL THE NICE BREEZE, AND I CAN FEEL AS THOUGH IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PLACE CREATED FOR ME.
BUT WHEN I'M WITH HER, THINGS ARE DIFFERENT. FOR EXAMPLE, A TREE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A TREE ON TV; IT HAS A COOL SHADOW THAT I SEE IN FRONT OF ME; IT HAS LEAVES THAT STIR IN THE WIND, AND IT EMITS A GREEN FRAGRANCE. THAT'S HOW IT IS.
IT'S UNCONDITIONAL, AND THERE'S NO UNEASINESS.
LATELY, I'VE STARTED TO THINK ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION, ALTHOUGH IT'S A LITTLE LATE FOR THAT.
IF IT'S POSSIBLE, I WANT TO GO TO A UNIVERSITY IN TOKYO WITH HER.
OH?
SO THE TWO OF YOU DECIDED THAT TOGETHER
NO, I HAVEN'T SPOKEN WITH HER ABOUT IT YET.
WHY NOT?
BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE ANY SELF-CONFIDENCE.

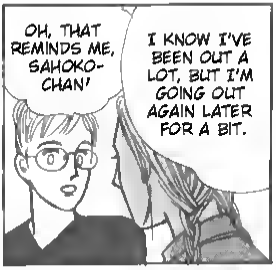

...
POP
I JUST WANTED TO TRY SAYING IT, THAT'S ALL.
YOU'RE BEING QUITE CHILDISH, AND AT SUCH AN EARLY HOUR!
WOULD YOU BUTTER MY TOAST FOR ME, DEAR?
THE ICE AROUND HER HEART HAS BROKEN, AND TIME HAS BEGUN TO PASS FOR HER. I WONDER WHAT SORT OF MAGIC SHE USED, THAT GIRL IN THE PICTURE?
ANYWAY, IT'S REALLY SURPRISING. SHE TALKED ABOUT HER FUTURE.
BUT THAT PICTURE REALLY WAS CUTE. SHE MUST HAVE BROUGHT IT IN ORDER TO SHOW IT TO ME. IT WAS REALLY A POOR PERFORMANCE, THE WAY SHE PRETENDED TO ACCIDENTALLY DROP IT.
SHE DID WHAT WE HAD BEEN TRYING TO DO FOR YEARS.

ESSENTIALLY, NOTHING HAS CHANGED WITH RESPECT TO HER SITUATION OR HER PAST WOUNDS
IF THIS TEMPORARY PLEASURE CAUSES HER TO LET HER GUARD DOWN AND LEAVES THE DOOR TO HER HEART OPEN,
SHE CLOSED OFF HER HEART BECAUSE SHE INSTINCTIVELY KNEW THAT IT WAS THE ONLY WAY TO PROTECT HERSELF, RIGHT?
IT COULD BE DANGEROUS.
WE MUSN'T JUST BLINDLY BE HAPPY ABOUT THIS.
SHE WON'T BE ABLE TO PROTECT HERSELF FROM ANY KIND OF INVASION.
FROM WHAT YOU'VE SAID, IT SOUNDS LIKE SHE'S JUST PLAYING HOUSE.
PLAYING HOUSE CAN ALSO RECONSTRUCT THE WORLD.
EVEN IF IT'S ONLY TEMPORARY, IF HAPPINESS BUILDS UP IT CAN BECOME SOMETHING POWERFUL
MAYBE WE SHOULD EXPECT THAT TO HAPPEN, INSTEAD
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN SHE SHOULD KEEP HER HEART SEALED FOREVER.


SHE'S SURE TO REALIZE SOON THAT SHE CAN'T SHUT OUT REALITY SO EASILY.
BUT THAT'S ONLY REALIZED WITHIN A SEALED-OFF SPACE AND PERIOD OF TIME.
AT LEAST, WHILE SHE'S STILL ALIVE, SHE CAN'T.
HMM?
YOU KNOW, FOOD HAS A THING CALLED A "BEST EATEN BY DATE"...
HM? BUT WE STILL HAVE SOME LEFT.
RIO-CHAN, WE SHOULD BUY SOME SALAD OIL.
uh huh
YOU HAVE TO START WORRYING ABOUT THINGS LIKE THAT A LITTLE.


OKAY, I'LL BE WAITING.
BYE. I'LL SEE YOU AROUND 7, OKAY?
SAAAHOKO-CHAAAN, I SAW YOU! YOU WERE IN FRONT OF THE SUPERMARKET WITH A CUTE BOY! ♡
MY DEAR! YOU LIED TO US WHEN YOU SAID YOU WERE GOING TO BE WITH A CLASSMATE.
I'M HOME.
OH! WELL, I THOUGHT AS MUCH.
BUT YOUR SCHOOL IS AN ALL-GIRLS SCHOOL, ISN'T IT? UM ?
WHAT?
I DIDN'T LIE TO YOU
BUT THAT REALLY IS MY CLASSMATE. REALLY!
DON'T WORRY, I WON'T TELL YOUR AUNT ABOUT IT.
WELCOME HOME, SAHOKO-CHAN.
I'VE RETURNED

A LITTLE WHILE AGO, YOUR PARENTS CALLED. THEY WANT TO GO OUT TO DINNER WITH YOU TONIGHT.


OH, THAT REMINDS ME, SAHOKO-CHAN!
I KNOW I'VE BEEN OUT A LOT, BUT I'M GOING OUT AGAIN LATER FOR A BIT.

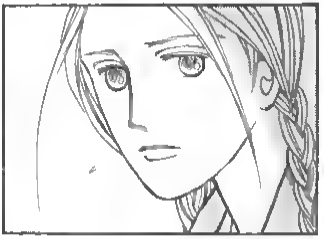
THE BRAND OF TOFU WE USUALLY BUY WAS ALL SOLD OUT, SO I HAD TO GET A DIFFERENT BRAND.
OH.
THAT'S FINE.
SUPER W.L.W

IT'S ALL RIGHT IF THEY COME AT 6, ISN'T IT?
THEY SAID THEY NEEDED TO SPEAK WITH YOU ABOUT SOMETHING, BUT I THINK THEY REALLY JUST WANT TO SEE THEIR DAUGHTER'S FACE.

I'M SORRY. SOMETHING URGENT CAME UP, AND I CAN'T COME TODAY.

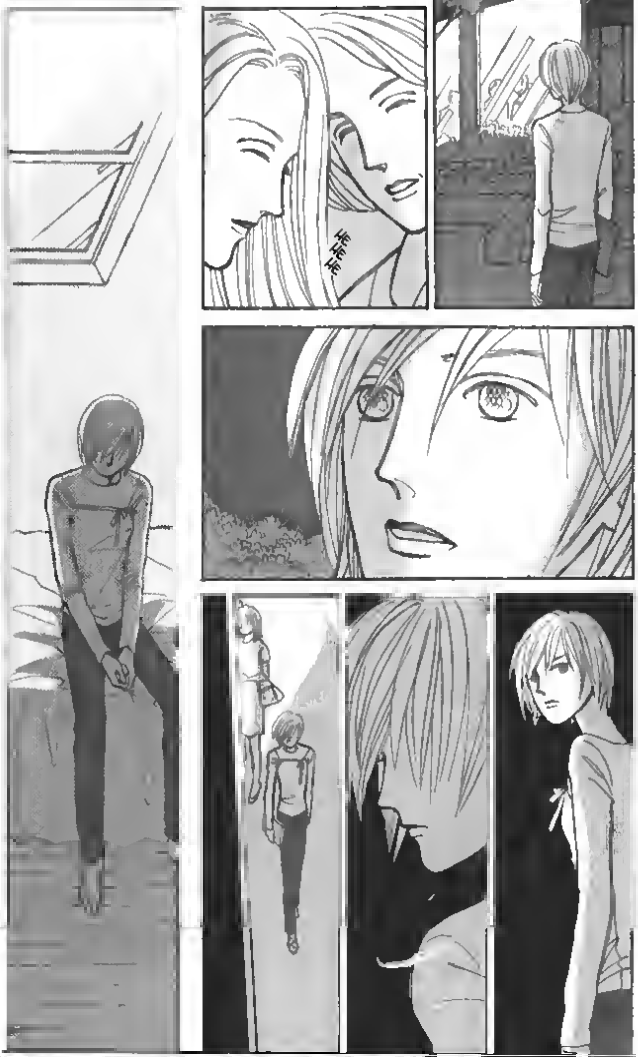
HELLO, RIO-CHAN.

ACCEPT THEIR OFFER, AND LET THEM BUY YOU SOMETHING NICE TO EAT.
YES...
UM...



=SIGH=
CLICK
OKAY, I SEE... YEAH, I UNDER-STAND.
SEE YOU TOMOR-ROW. YEAH, I'LL PUT IT IN THE FRIDGE.
SUPERM
SU
SIGH

ﾊﾗﾘ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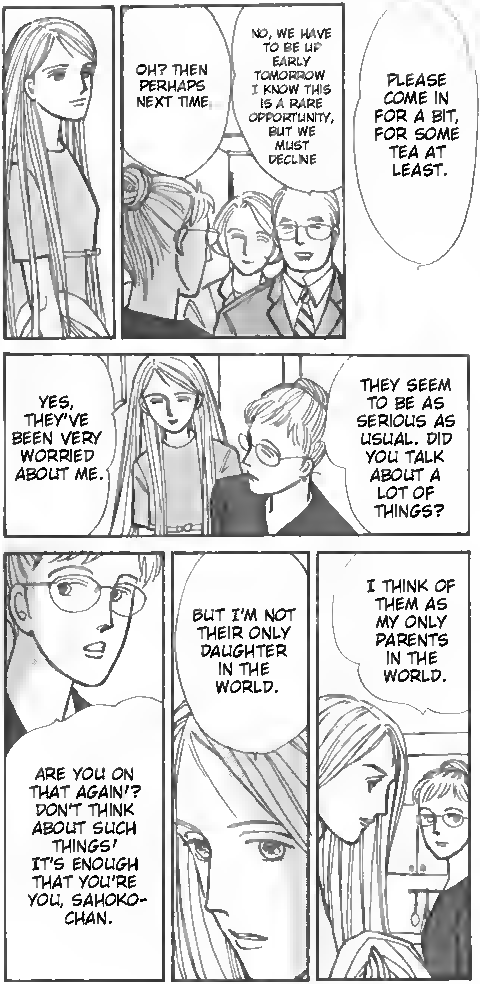
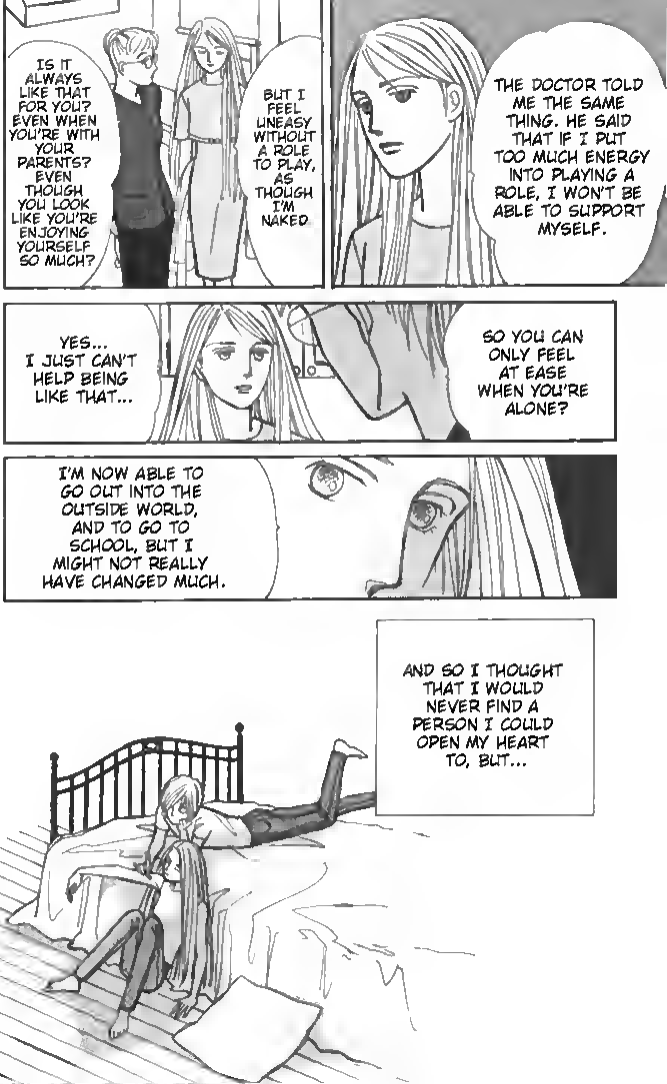
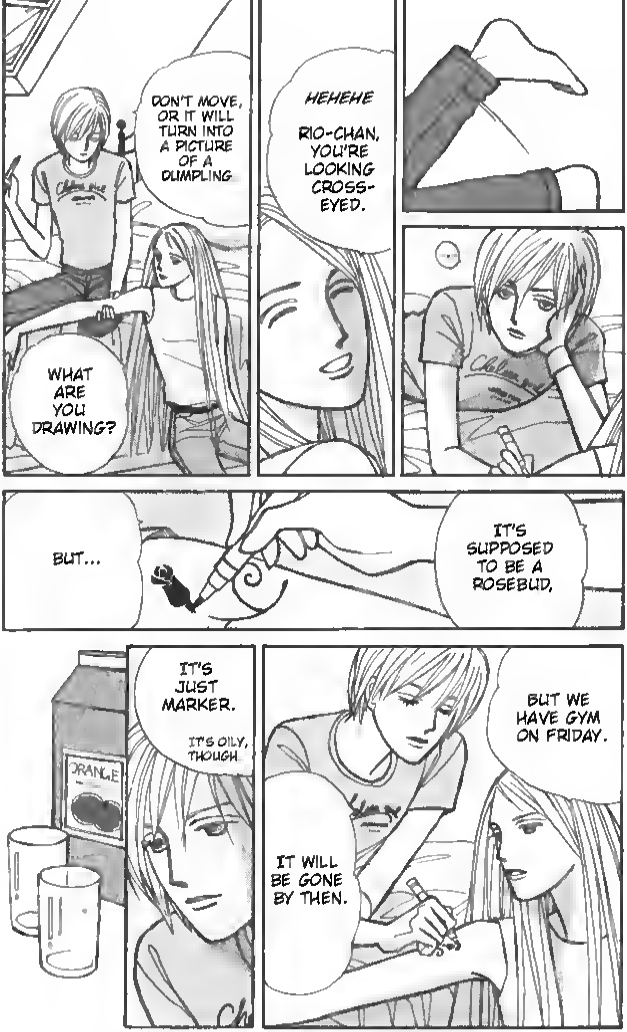
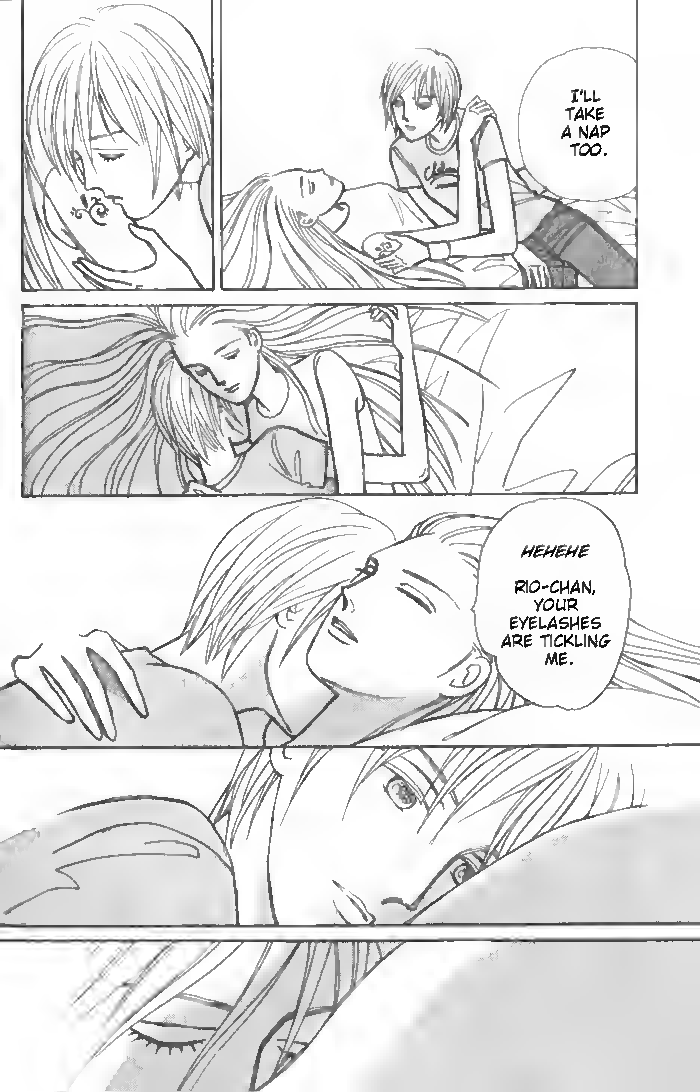

PLEASE COME IN FOR A BIT, FOR SOME TEA AT LEAST.
NO, WE HAVE TO BE UP EARLY TOMORROW. I KNOW THIS IS A RARE OPPORTUNITY, BUT WE MUST DECLINE
OH? THEN PERHAPS NEXT TIME.
THEY SEEM TO BE AS SERIOUS AS USUAL. DID YOU TALK ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS?
YES, THEY'VE BEEN VERY WORRIED ABOUT ME.
I THINK OF THEM AS MY ONLY PARENTS IN THE WORLD.
BUT I'M NOT THEIR ONLY DAUGHTER IN THE WORLD.
ARE YOU ON THAT AGAIN!? DON'T THINK ABOUT SUCH THINGS! IT'S ENOUGH THAT YOU'RE YOU, SAHOKO-CHAN.

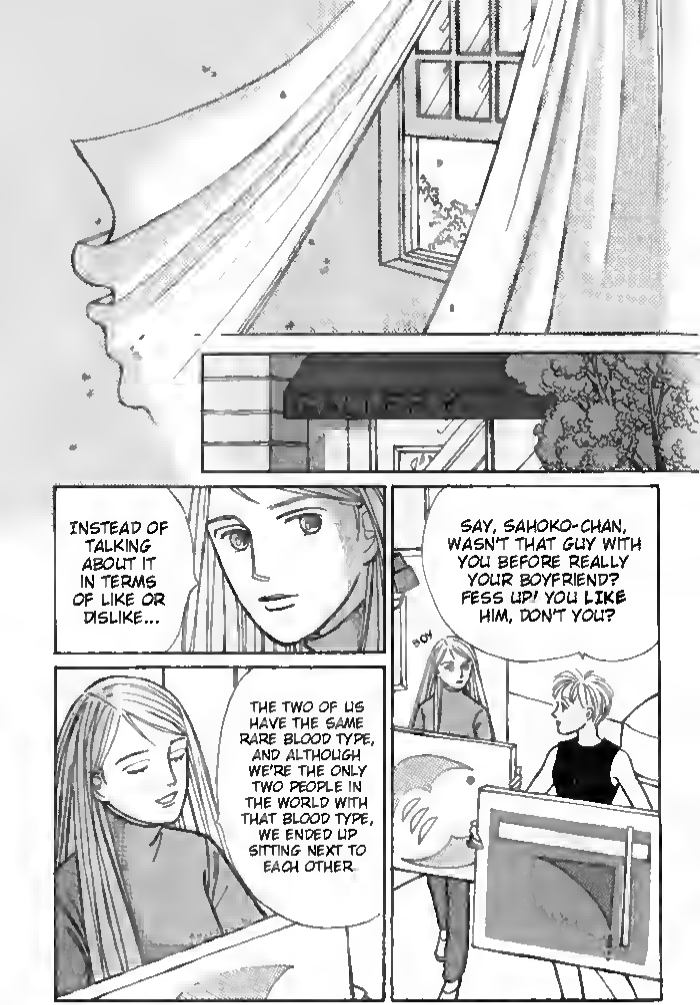

IS IT ALWAYS LIKE THAT FOR YOU? EVEN WHEN YOU'RE WITH YOUR PARENTS? EVEN THOUGH YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE ENJOYING YOURSELF SO MUCH?
BUT I FEEL UNEASY WITHOUT A ROLE TO PLAY, AS THOUGH I'M NAKED.
THE DOCTOR TOLD ME THE SAME THING. HE SAID THAT IF I PUT TOO MUCH ENERGY INTO PLAYING A ROLE, I WON'T BE ABLE TO SUPPORT MYSELF.
YES... I JUST CAN'T HELP BEING LIKE THAT...
SO YOU CAN ONLY FEEL AT EASE WHEN YOU'RE ALONE?
I'M NOW ABLE TO GO OUT INTO THE OUTSIDE WORLD, AND TO GO TO SCHOOL, BUT I MIGHT NOT REALLY HAVE CHANGED MUCH.
AND SO I THOUGHT THAT I WOULD NEVER FIND A PERSON I COULD OPEN MY HEART TO, BUT...

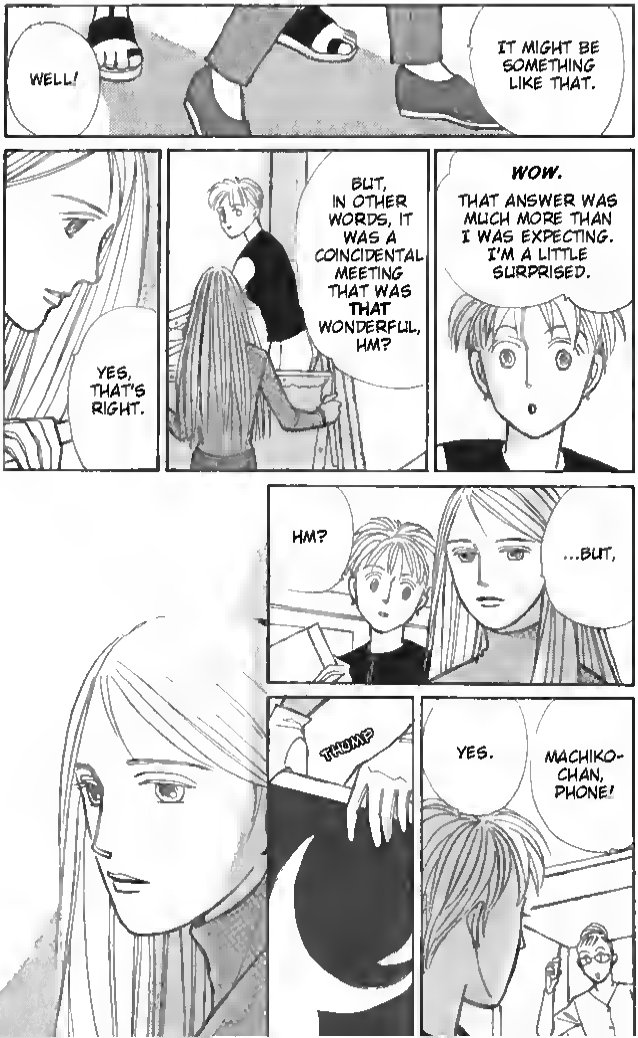

DON'T MOVE, OR IT WILL TURN INTO A PICTURE OF A DUMPLING.
WHAT ARE YOU DRAWING?
HEHEHE
RIO-CHAN, YOU'RE LOOKING CROSS-EYED.
BUT...
IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A ROSEBUD.
IT'S JUST MARKER.
IT'S OILY, THOUGH.
ORANGE
BUT WE HAVE GYM ON FRIDAY.
IT WILL BE GONE BY THEN.

I BROUGHT JUICE...

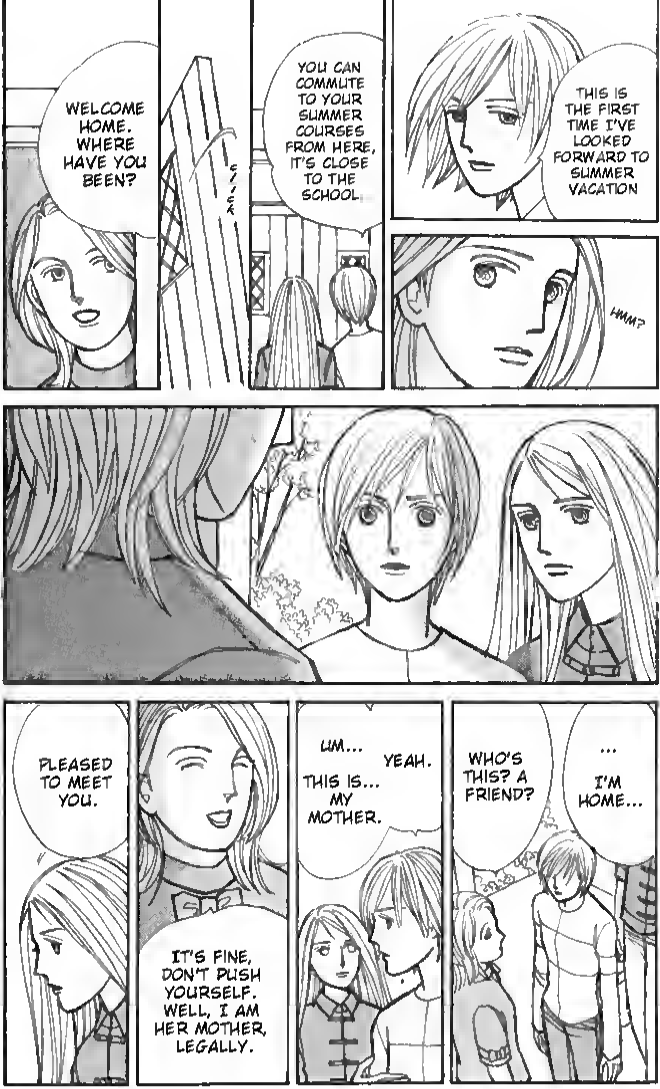
TOGETHER
ALWAYS...
MM
Chelsea girl
Chelsea girl
SIGH.
YES, YOU WERE.
OH NO, WAS I ASLEEP?

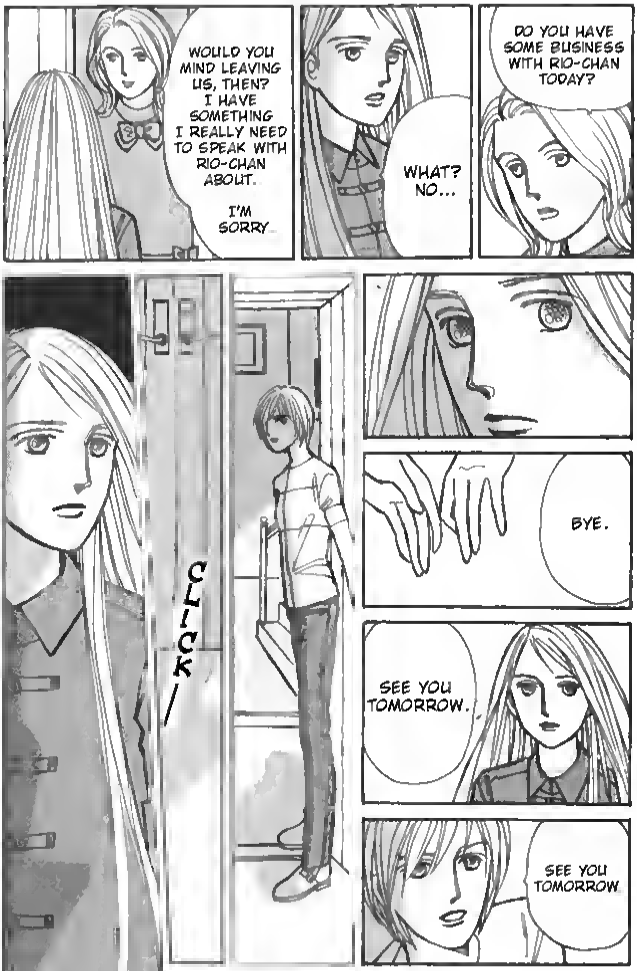

I'LL TAKE A NAP TOO.
HEHEHE
RIO-CHAN, YOUR EYELASHES ARE TICKLING ME.

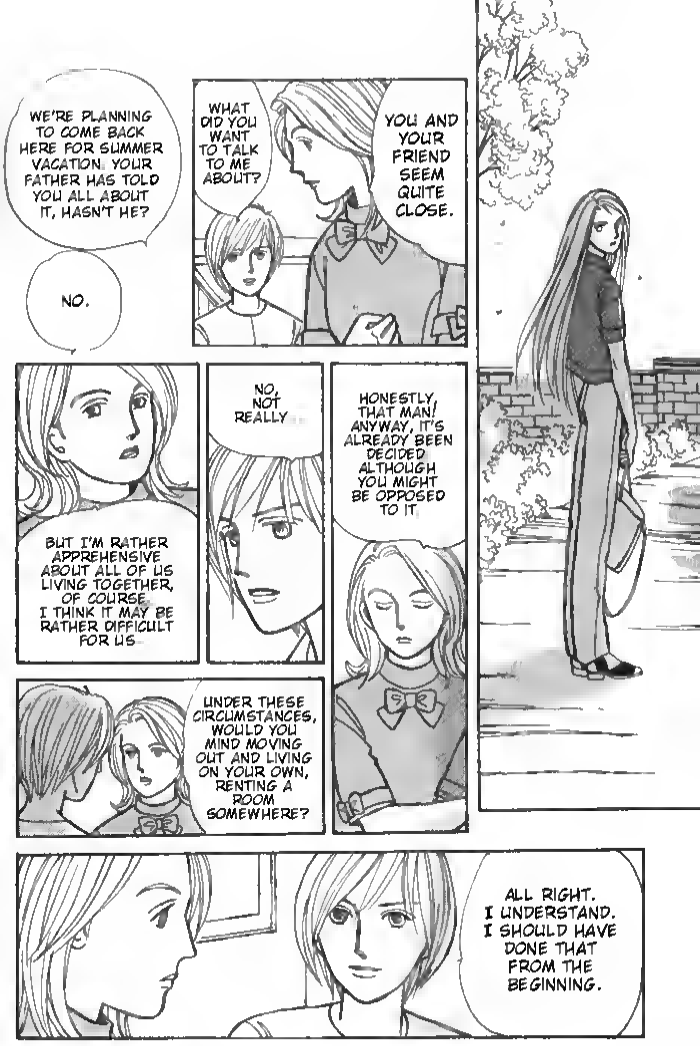

INSTEAD OF TALKING ABOUT IT IN TERMS OF LIKE OR DISLIKE...
THE TWO OF US HAVE THE SAME RARE BLOOD TYPE, AND ALTHOUGH WE'RE THE ONLY TWO PEOPLE IN THE WORLD WITH THAT BLOOD TYPE, WE ENDED UP SITTING NEXT TO EACH OTHER.
SAY, SAHOKO-CHAN, WASN'T THAT GUY WITH YOU BEFORE REALLY YOUR BOYFRIEND? FESS UP! YOU LIKE HIM, DON'T YOU?
BOY

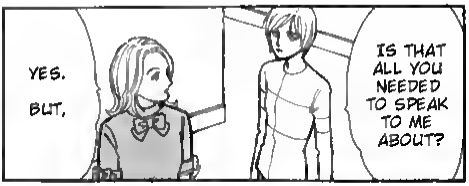

WELL!
IT MIGHT BE SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
YES, THAT'S RIGHT.
BUT, IN OTHER WORDS, IT WAS A COINCIDENTAL MEETING THAT WAS THAT WONDERFUL, HM?
WOW.
THAT ANSWER WAS MUCH MORE THAN I WAS EXPECTING. I'M A LITTLE SURPRISED.
HM?
...BUT,
PHONE!
YES.
MACHIKO-CHAN, PHONE!

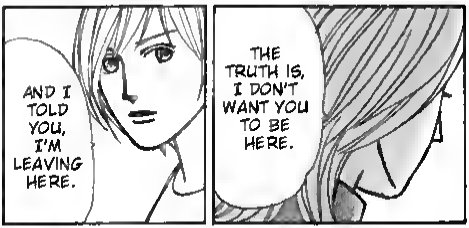
WAS THAT REALLY ALL IT WAS?
COINCIDENCE?
I WAS PLANNING TO, BUT
YEAH...
YOU'RE GOING TO GO BACK TO YOUR PARENTS' HOUSE, AREN'T YOU?
I WONDER IF THE RAINY SEASON HAS STARTED YET.
IT'S HOT TODAY, ISN'T IT?
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO DURING SUMMER VACATION?
HEHE
IT'S FOR STUDYING, SO I ABSOLUTELY HAVE TO DO IT.
THAT'S A GREAT IDEA.
STUDY, STUDY!
I HAVE SUMMER COURSES, AND SO I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE GOOD TO HAVE THE CLASS PRODIGY TEACH ME.

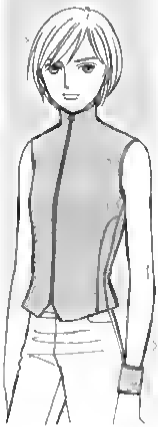

WELCOME HOME. WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
SLIDE
YOU CAN COMMUTE TO YOUR SUMMER COURSES FROM HERE, IT'S CLOSE TO THE SCHOOL.
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE LOOKED FORWARD TO SUMMER VACATION
HMM?
PLEASED TO MEET YOU.
IT'S FINE, DON'T PUSH YOURSELF. WELL, I AM HER MOTHER, LEGALLY.
UM... YEAH. THIS IS... MY MOTHER.
WHO'S THIS? A FRIEND?
... I'M HOME...

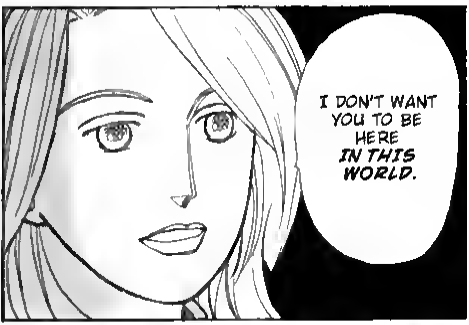

DO YOU HAVE SOME BUSINESS WITH RIO-CHAN TODAY?
WHAT? NO...
WOULD YOU MIND LEAVING US, THEN? I HAVE SOMETHING I REALLY NEED TO SPEAK WITH RIO-CHAN ABOUT.
I'M SORRY.
BYE.
SEE YOU TOMORROW.
SEE YOU TOMORROW.
CLICK—

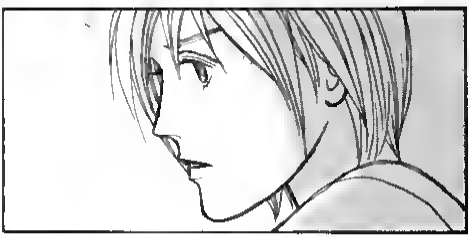

WE'RE PLANNING TO COME BACK HERE FOR SUMMER VACATION. YOUR FATHER HAS TOLD YOU ALL ABOUT IT, HASN'T HE?
NO.
WHAT DID YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME ABOUT?
YOU AND YOUR FRIEND SEEM QUITE CLOSE.
BUT I'M RATHER APPREHENSIVE ABOUT ALL OF US LIVING TOGETHER, OF COURSE. I THINK IT MAY BE RATHER DIFFICULT FOR US.
NO, NOT REALLY...
HONESTLY, THAT MAN! ANYWAY, IT'S ALREADY BEEN DECIDED ALTHOUGH YOU MIGHT BE OPPOSED TO IT.
UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, WOULD YOU MIND MOVING OUT AND LIVING ON YOUR OWN, RENTING A ROOM SOMEWHERE?
ALL RIGHT. I UNDERSTAND. I SHOULD HAVE DONE THAT FROM THE BEGINNING.


IS THAT ALL YOU NEEDED TO SPEAK TO ME ABOUT?
YES.
BUT,

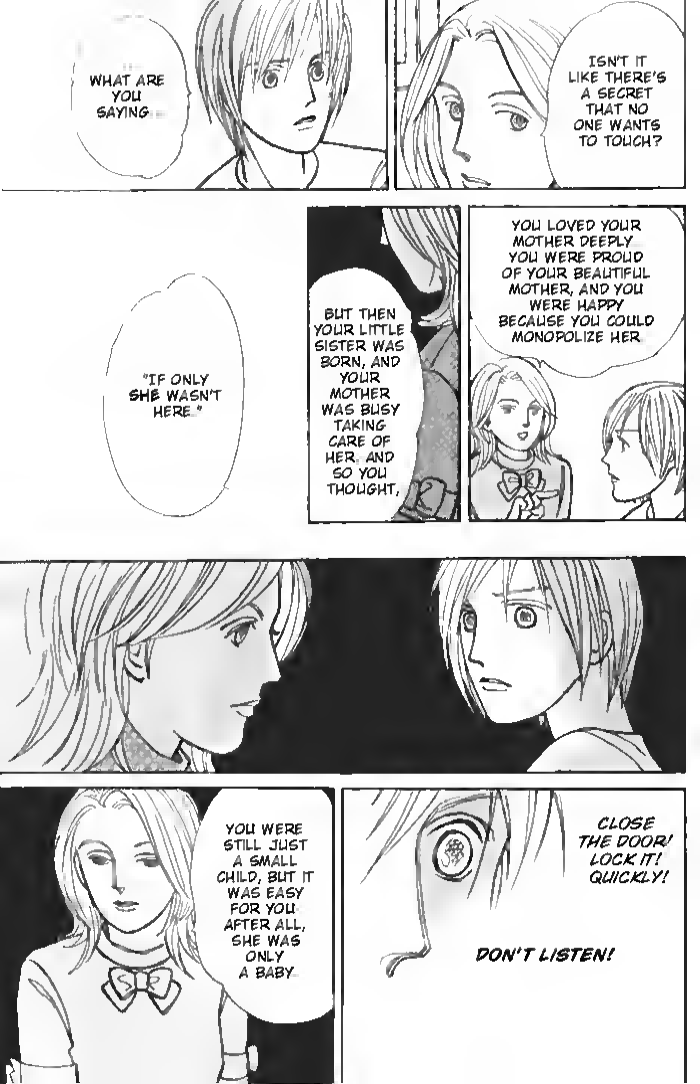

THE TRUTH IS, I DON'T WANT YOU TO BE HERE.
AND I TOLD YOU, I'M LEAVING HERE.



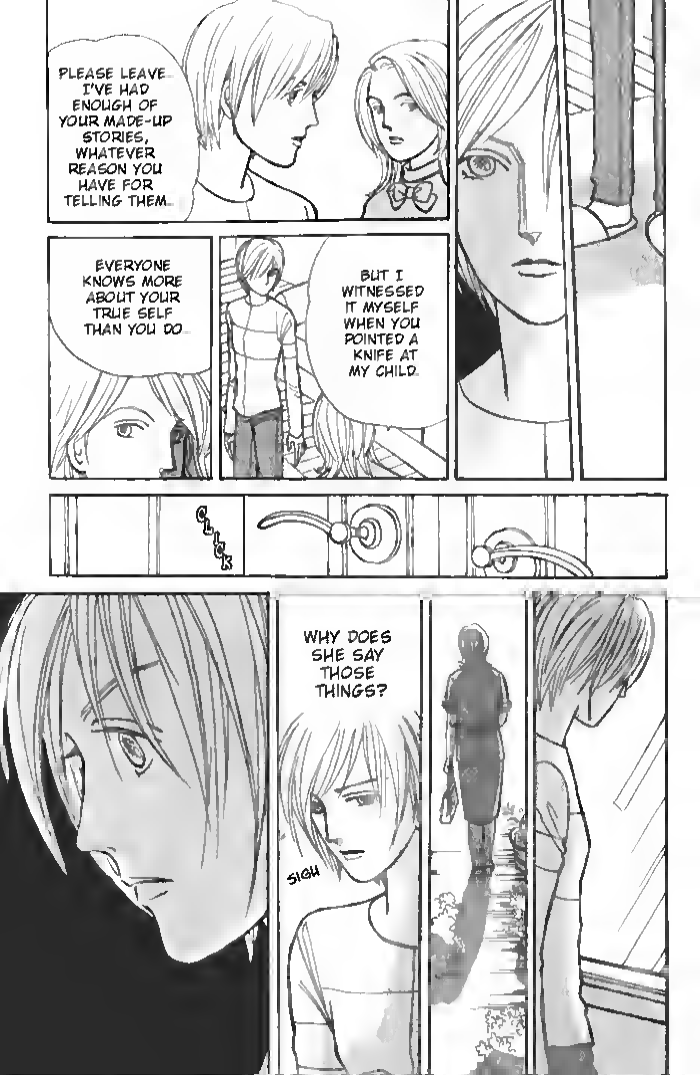

I DON'T WANT YOU TO BE HERE *IN THIS WORLD.*

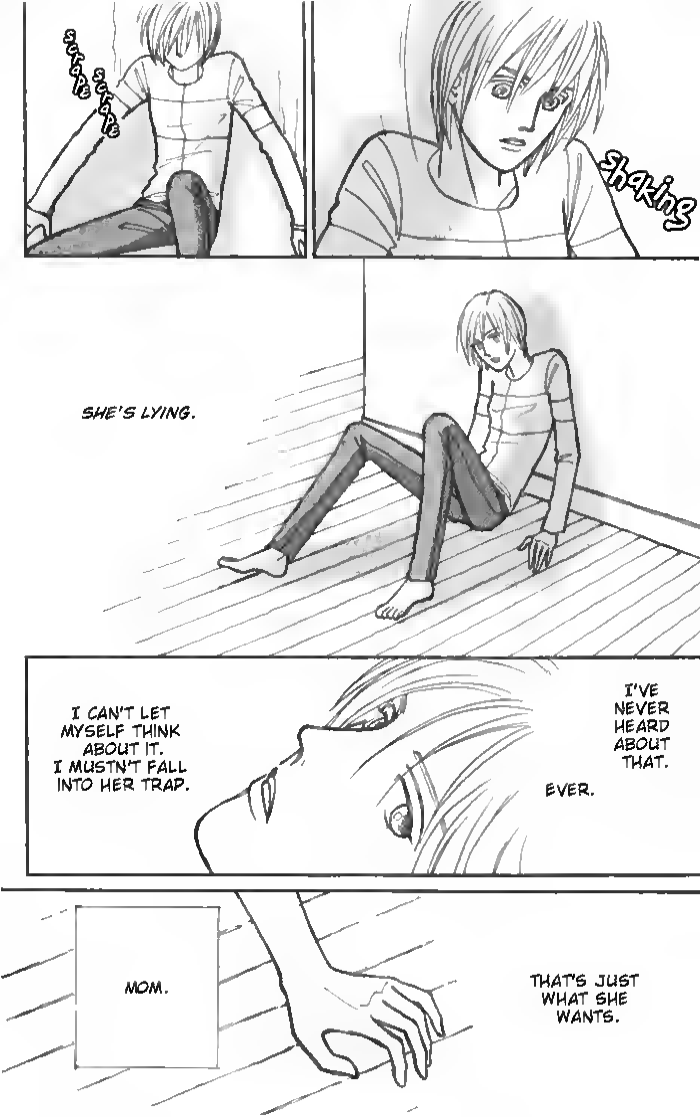


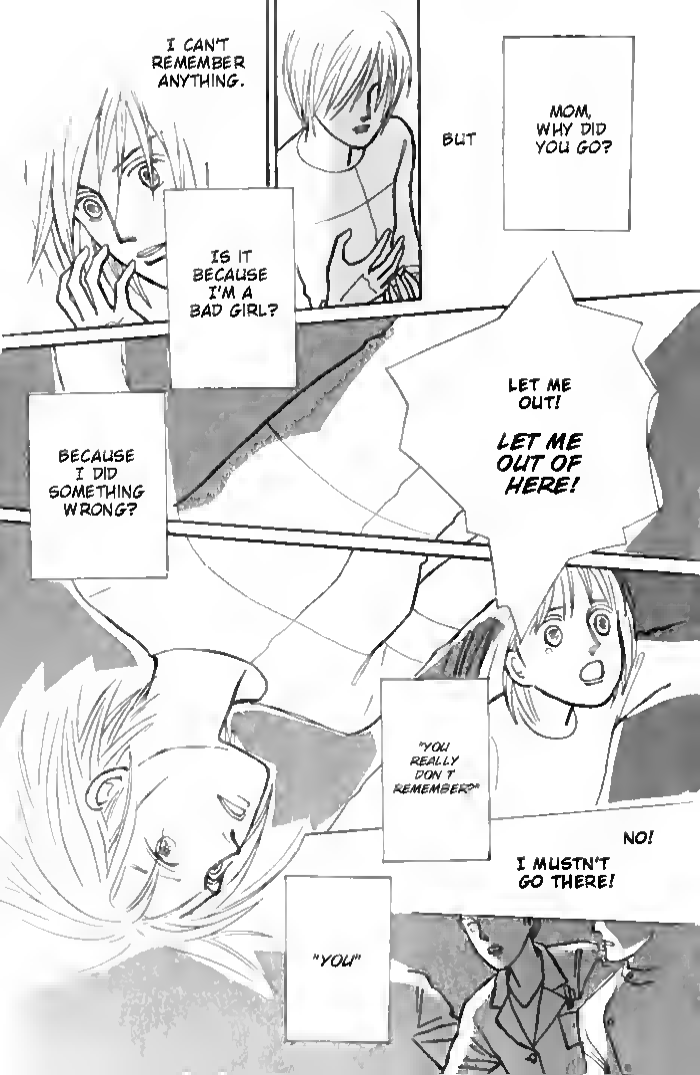
THE WAY THE NEIGHBORS PEEKED THROUGH THEIR CURTAINS AND GOSSIPED.
THE NERVOUSNESS I FELT WHEN I HEARD THE SIREN OF THE APPROACHING AMBULANCE.
FOR EXAMPLE, MY SURPRISE ON THE NIGHT YOU CUT YOUR WRISTS FOR THE FIRST TIME
THIS HOUSE HAS A LOT OF MEMORIES.
THIS WAS MY DREAM HOUSE. I DIDN'T WANT IT TO BE BLEMISHED WITH THAT SORT OF THING
IT HAPPENED OVER AND OVER I SCRUBBED FRANTICALLY AT THE BLOOD THAT HAD FALLEN ON THE FLOOR AND THE RAILING
DON'T YOU THINK IT'S STRANGE? ALTHOUGH SHE DIED YOUNG, SHE'S YOUR ONLY SISTER, SO WHY DOESN'T ANYONE MENTION HER IN FRONT OF YOU?
WHAT?
AND SO YOU'VE FORGOTTEN ABOUT YOUR LITTLE SISTER TOO, HAVEN'T YOU?
DO YOU REMEMBER? OR HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN? YOU'RE LUCKY, YOU CAN JUST SAY TO YOURSELF THAT YOU'VE FORGOTTEN ALL THE UNPLEASANT THINGS

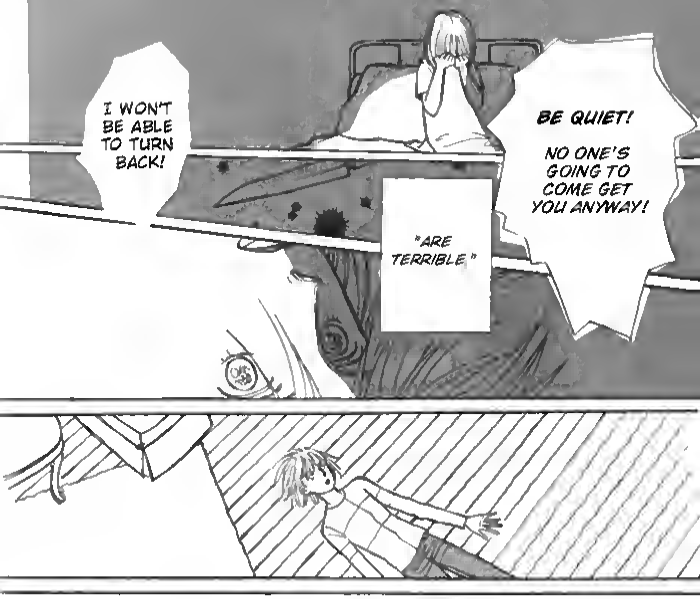

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING...
ISN'T IT LIKE THERE'S A SECRET THAT NO ONE WANTS TO TOUCH?
"IF ONLY SHE WASN'T HERE."
BUT THEN YOUR LITTLE SISTER WAS BORN, AND YOUR MOTHER WAS BUSY TAKING CARE OF HER. AND SO YOU THOUGHT,
YOU LOVED YOUR MOTHER DEEPLY. YOU WERE PROUD OF YOUR BEAUTIFUL MOTHER, AND YOU WERE HAPPY BECAUSE YOU COULD MONOPOLIZE HER.
YOU WERE STILL JUST A SMALL CHILD, BUT IT WAS EASY FOR YOU. AFTER ALL, SHE WAS ONLY A BABY.
CLOSE THE DOOR! LOCK IT! QUICKLY!
DON'T LISTEN!

ONE COULD CALL IT AN ACCIDENT. THERE WAS NO BLAME, NO PUNISHMENT.
EVERYONE THINKS THAT IT'S BETTER THAT YOU DON'T REMEMBER IT, SO THEY'VE BEEN KEEPING IT FROM YOU.
THIS IS NONSENSE. I KNOW IT.
SHE ALWAYS DOES THIS SORT OF THING
BUT SOMETHING INSIDE YOUR HEART IS SHOUTING THAT YOU'RE STRANGE, THAT YOU'RE UNNATURAL.
AND SO YOUR MOTHER LEFT, TOO.
SHE ABANDONED YOU.
AND YOU BECAME EVEN MORE TERRIBLE.


PLEASE LEAVE... I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR MADE-UP STORIES, WHATEVER REASON YOU HAVE FOR TELLING THEM...
EVERYONE KNOWS MORE ABOUT YOUR TRUE SELF THAN YOU DO...
BUT I WITNESSED IT MYSELF WHEN YOU POINTED A KNIFE AT MY CHILD.
CLICK
WHY DOES SHE SAY THOSE THINGS?
SIGH

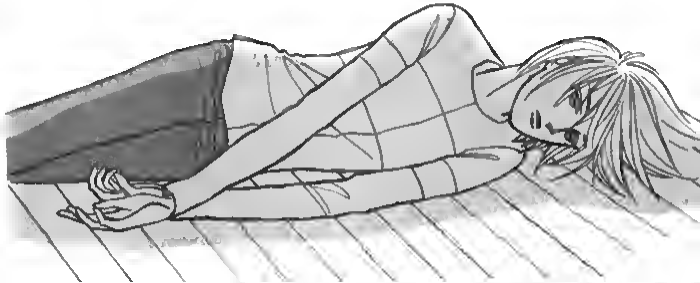

scrape scrape
shaking
SHE'S LYING.
I CAN'T LET MYSELF THINK ABOUT IT. I MUSTN'T FALL INTO HER TRAP.
I'VE NEVER HEARD ABOUT THAT.
EVER.
MOM.
THAT'S JUST WHAT SHE WANTS.


I CAN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING.
BUT
MOM, WHY DID YOU GO?
IS IT BECAUSE I'M A BAD GIRL?
LET ME OUT!
LET ME OUT OF HERE!
BECAUSE I DID SOMETHING WRONG?
"YOU REALLY DON'T REMEMBER?"
NO!
I MUSTN'T GO THERE!
"YOU!"



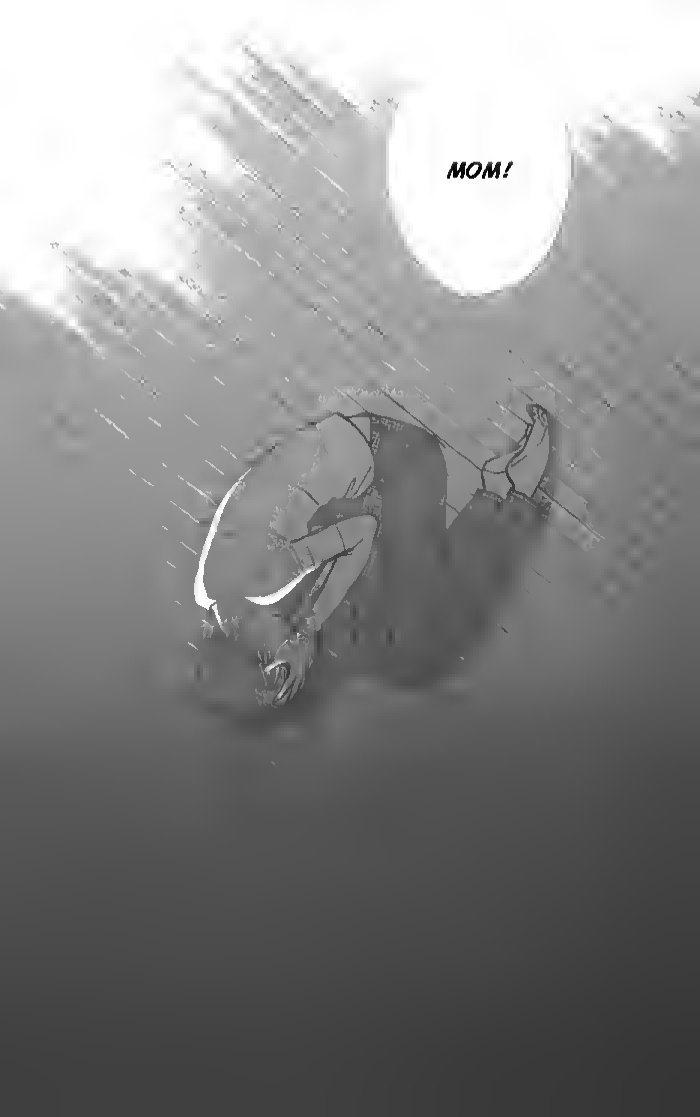

THIS IS JUST A PLACE OF HURT,

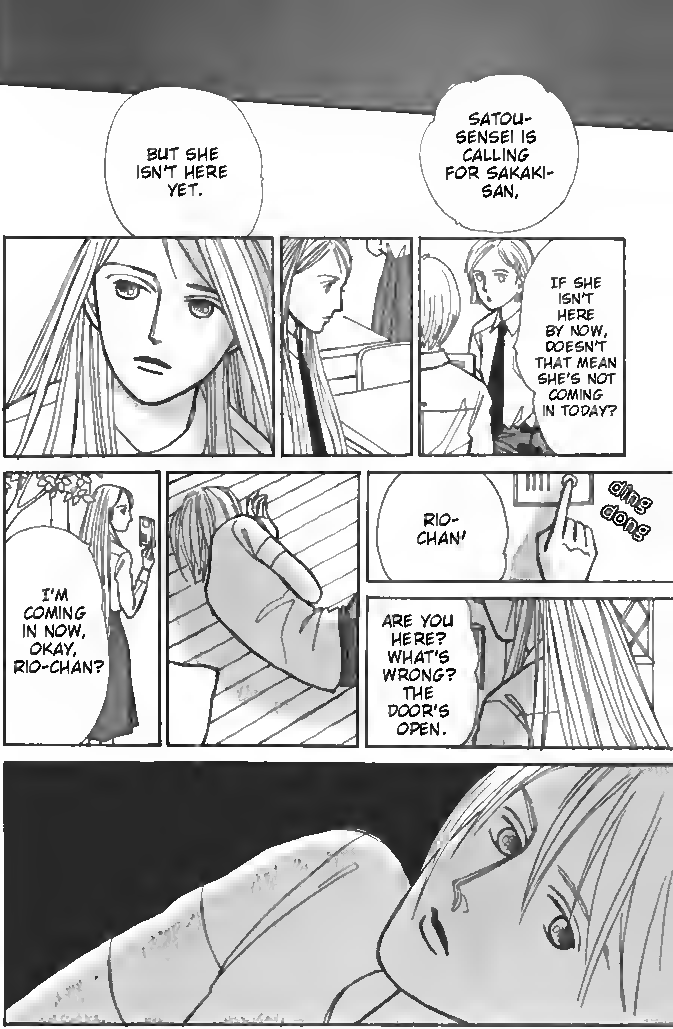
AND OF LOSS.

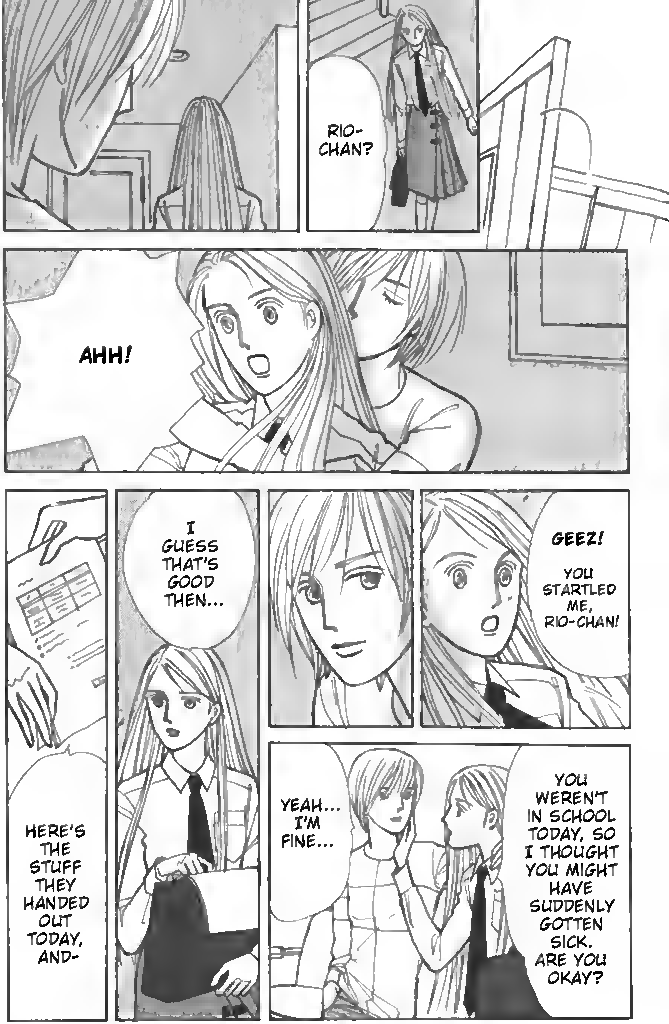


IT'S ALREADY FADING AWAY.

LET ME OUT OF HERE!
HELP!

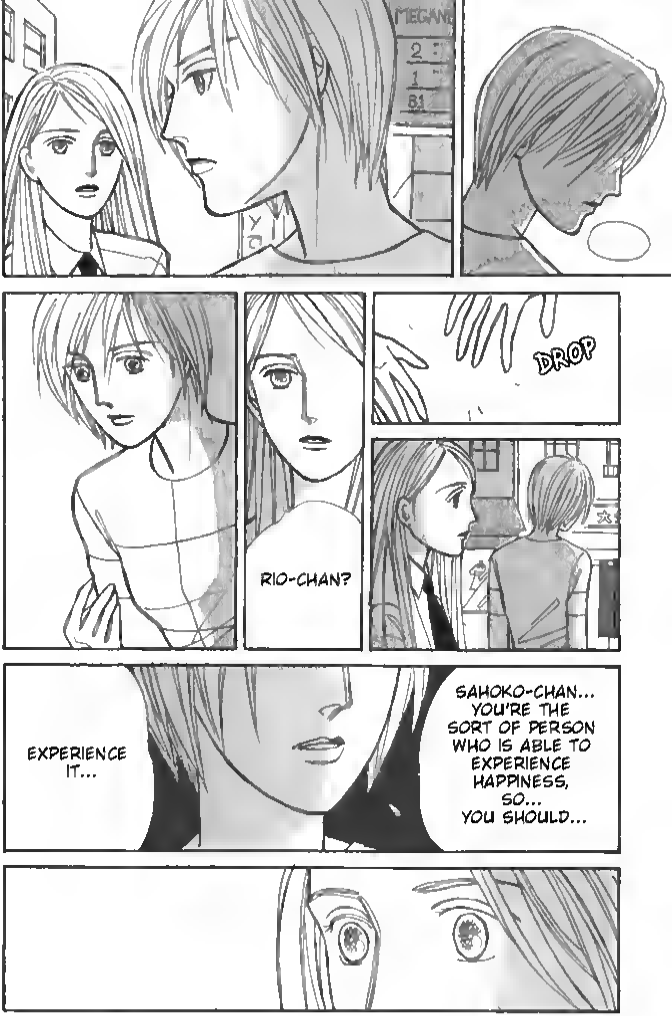

MOM!

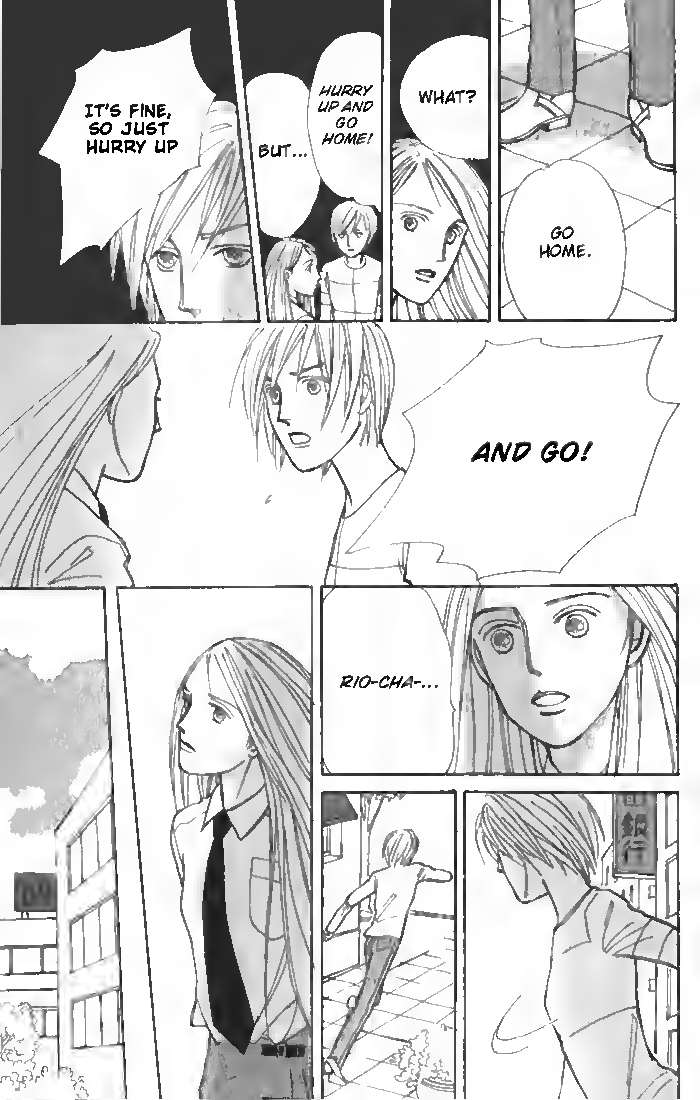

SATOU-SENSEI IS CALLING FOR SAKAKI-SAN.
BUT SHE ISN'T HERE YET.
IF SHE ISN'T HERE BY NOW, DOESN'T THAT MEAN SHE'S NOT COMING IN TODAY?
ding dong
RIO-CHAN!
ARE YOU HERE? WHAT'S WRONG? THE DOOR'S OPEN.
I'M COMING IN NOW, OKAY, RIO-CHAN?


RIO-CHAN?
AHH!
HERE'S THE STUFF THEY HANDED OUT TODAY, AND-
I GUESS THAT'S GOOD THEN...
GEEZ! YOU STARTLED ME, RIO-CHAN!
YEAH... I'M FINE...
YOU WEREN'T IN SCHOOL TODAY, SO I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT HAVE SUDDENLY GOTTEN SICK. ARE YOU OKAY?

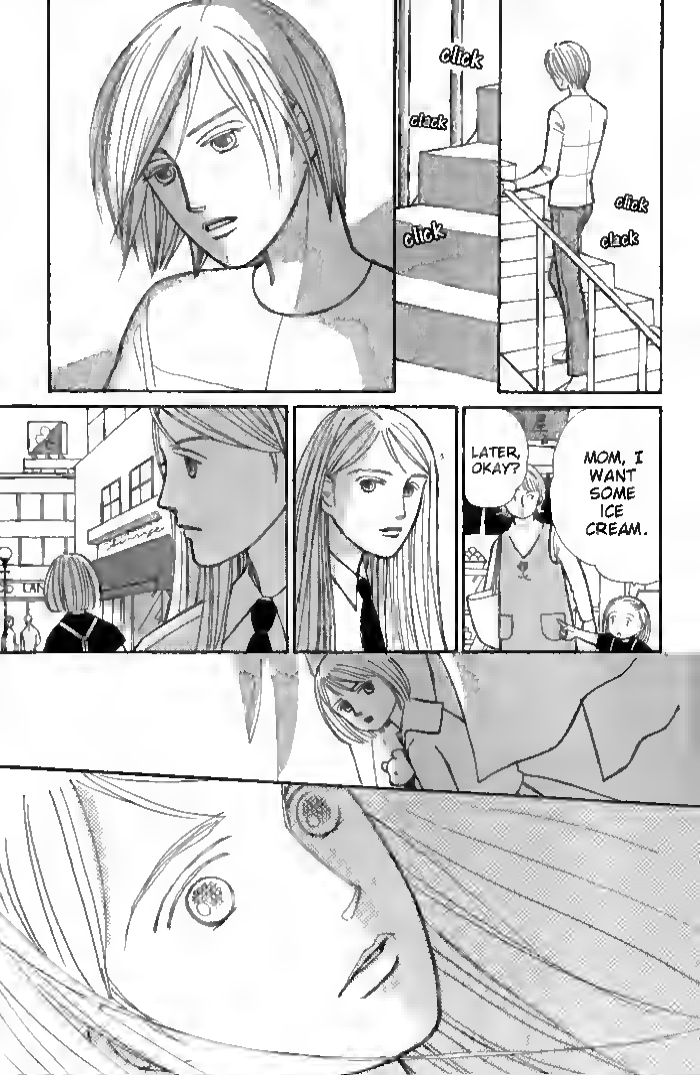
grab
another...
OH, DEAR.
WHAT'S WRONG, RIO-CHAN?
YOU SAID WE'D ALWAYS BE TOGETHER.
YEAH.
YOU SAID YOU WOULDN'T GO ANYWHERE.

RIO-CHAN!?
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
WE DON'T HAVE TO GO SO FAST...
OH, I SEE. YOU WANT TO SURPRISE ME. DID YOU FIND SOMETHING INTERESTING?
SAY, ON OUR WAY BACK LET'S STOP AT MIN-MI PARK. THE OLEANDER THERE IS SO PRETTY. IT'S RARE IN THIS AREA, ISN'T IT? WHEN I WAS LITTLE, I THOUGHT THAT IT WAS CHERRY BLOSSOMS BLOOMING IN SUMMER.

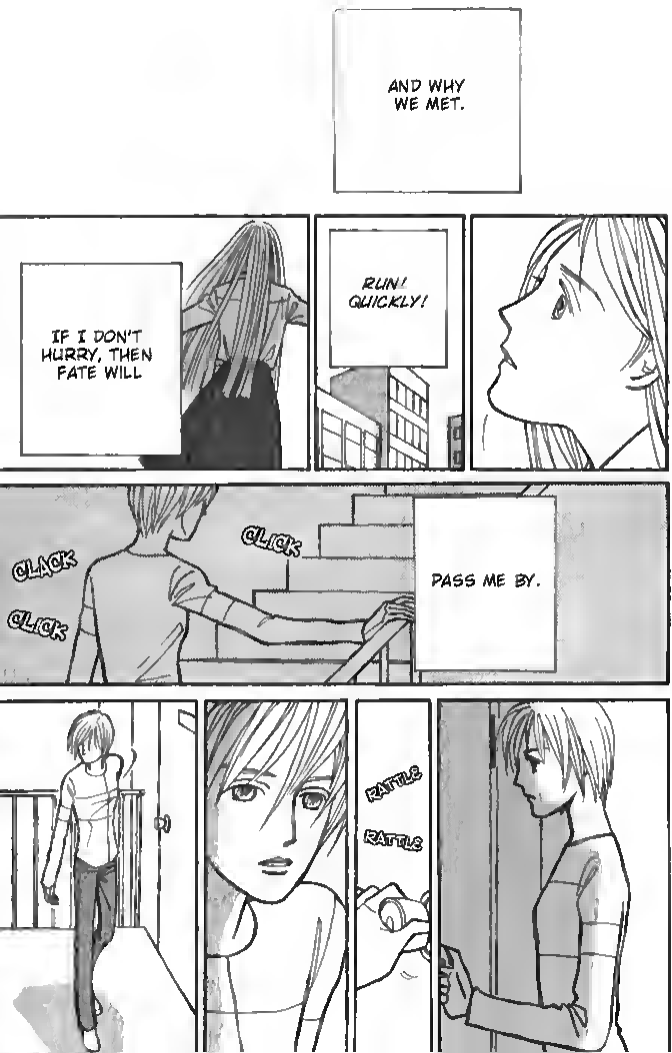

MEGANE
DROP
RIO-CHAN?
SAHOKO-CHAN... YOU'RE THE SORT OF PERSON WHO IS ABLE TO EXPERIENCE HAPPINESS, SO... YOU SHOULD...
EXPERIENCE IT...


GO HOME.
WHAT?
HURRY UP AND GO HOME!
BUT...
IT'S FINE, SO JUST HURRY UP
AND GO!
RIO-CHA-...
銀行

I HAD SOME-THING TO DO HERE...
IT'S UNUSUAL TO SEE YOU AROUND HERE ISN'T YOUR HOUSE IN THE OTHER DIRECTION?
HIGA-SAN!
IT'S SUMMER ALREADY, ISN'T IT?
YOU SHOULD JUST GO HOME EARLY. SEE ALL THOSE CLOUDS OVER THERE? IT MIGHT RAIN TONIGHT.
THAT I FEEL I KNOW THIS SUMMER?
WHY IS IT

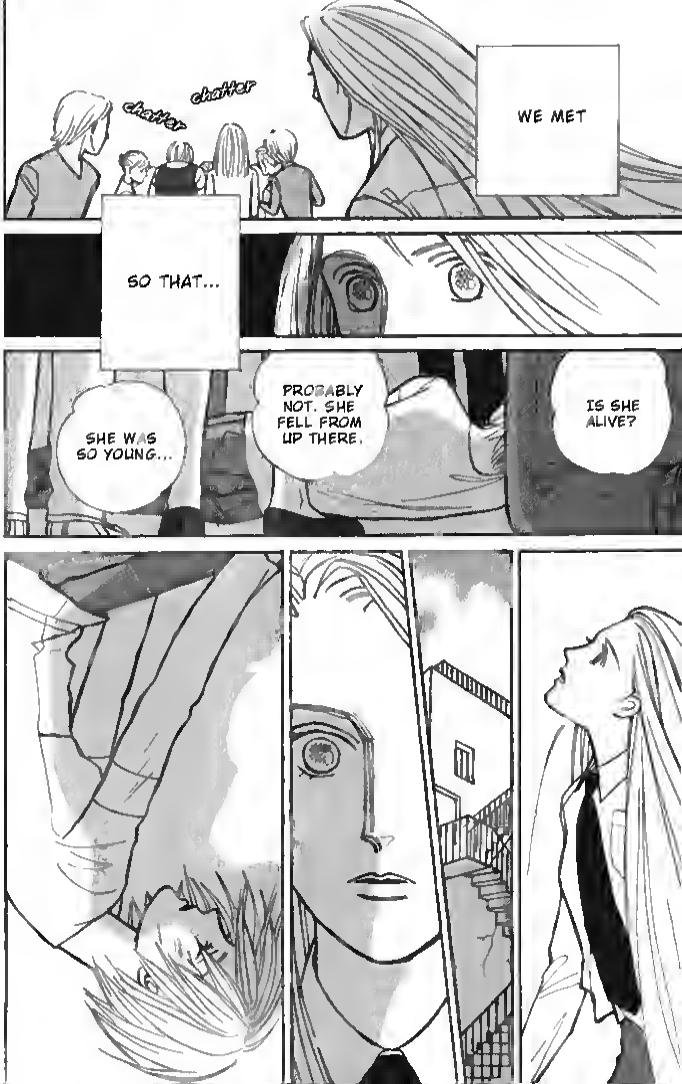

click
clack
click
click
clack
MOM, I WANT SOME ICE CREAM.
LATER, OKAY?

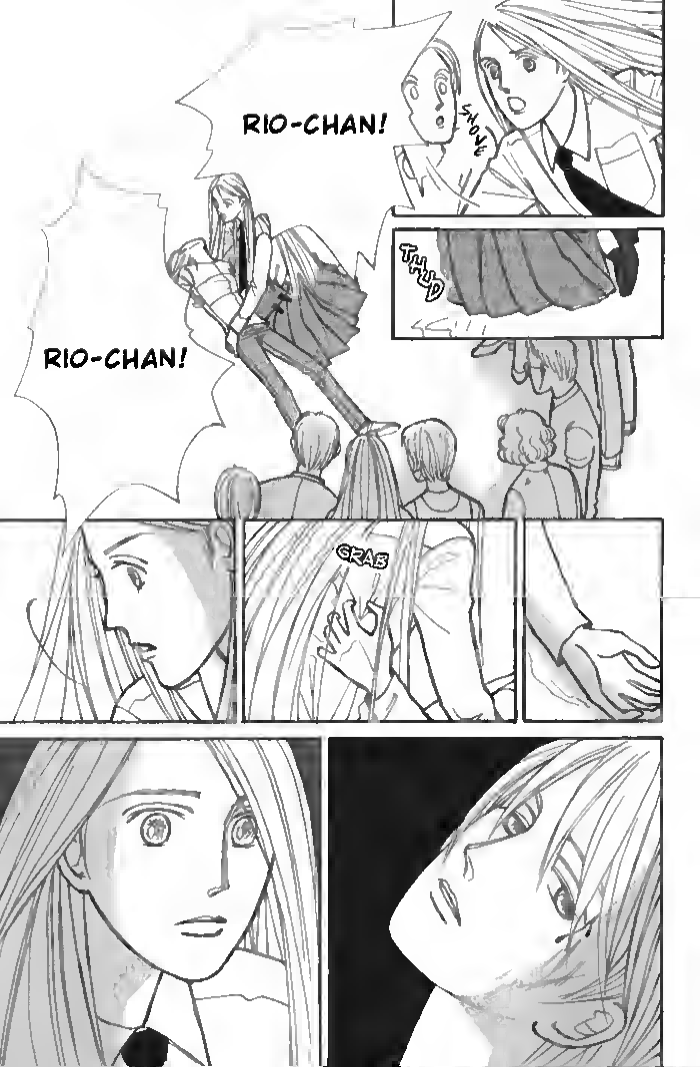
HIGA-SAN?
WHAT'S WRONG, HIGA-SAN?
WHY COULDN'T I REMEMBER BEFORE?
THERE'S A SINGLE REASON WHY I'M HERE ON THIS DAY, AT THIS MOMENT, IN THIS UNIFORM.

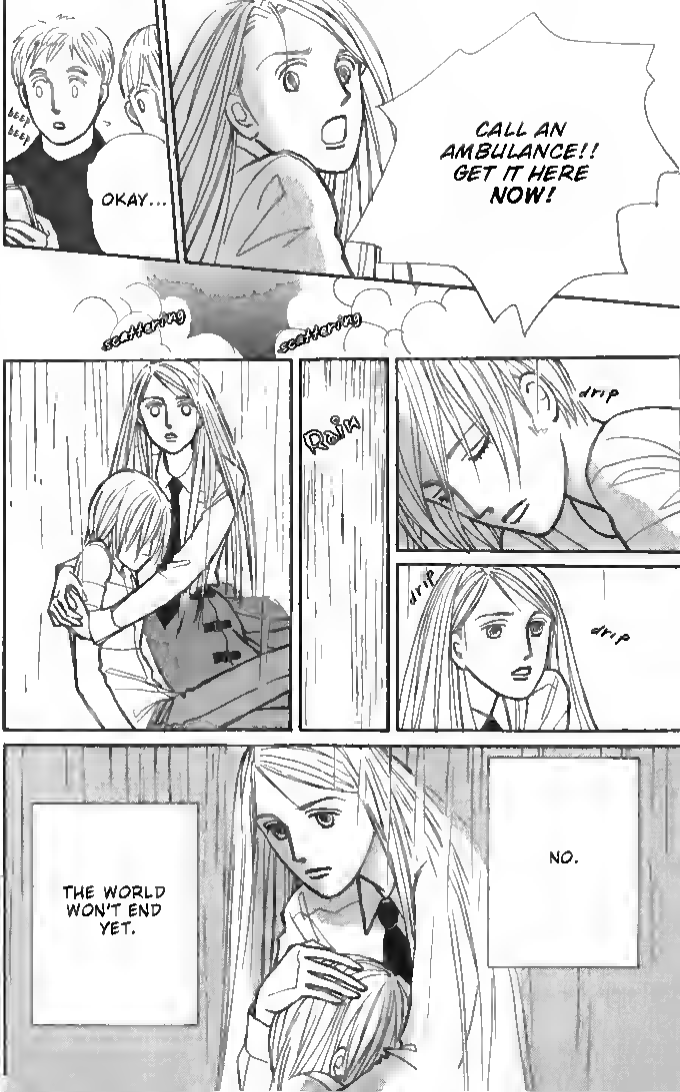

AND WHY WE MET.
IF I DON'T HURRY, THEN FATE WILL
RUN! QUICKLY!
CLACK
CLICK
CLICK
PASS ME BY.
RATTLE
RATTLE

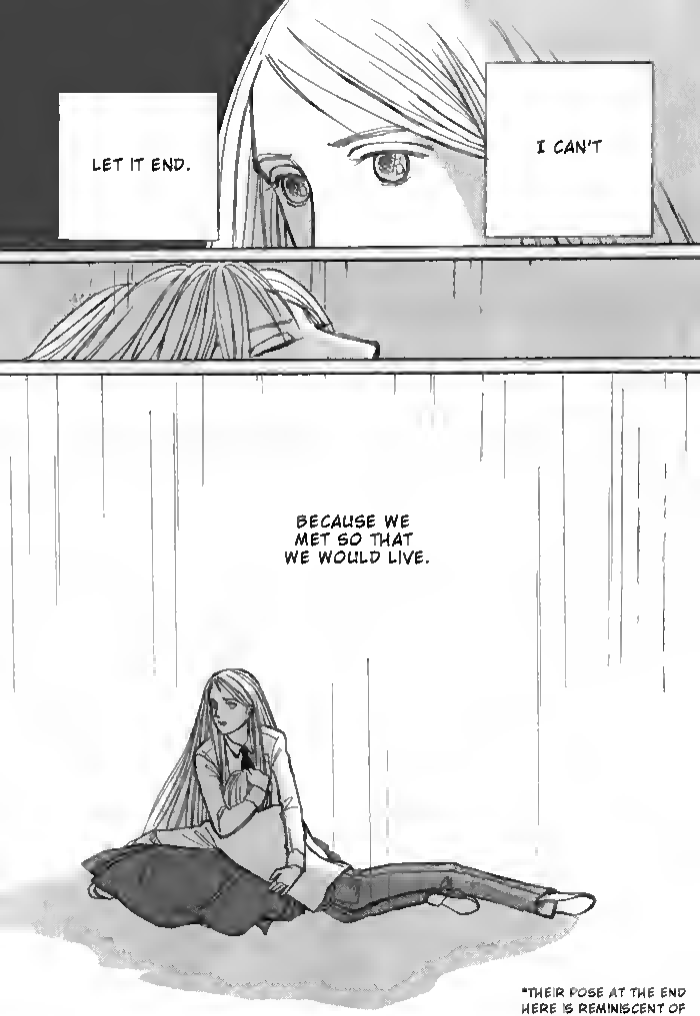
SO THAT WE WOULD BE SAD AND GRIEVE
RIO-CHAN, LISTEN TO ME!
WE DIDN'T MEET

RIO-CHAN...
IT SEEMS IT WAS A GIRL.
SOMEONE JUMPED OFF? HOW FRIGHTENING!
FROM THAT BUILDING?
YES, JUST NOW!


chatter
chatter
WE MET
SO THAT...
IS SHE ALIVE?
PROBABLY NOT. SHE FELL FROM UP THERE.
SHE WAS SO YOUNG...


RIO-CHAN!
SNAP
TRIP
RIO-CHAN!
GRAB


beep beep
OKAY...
CALL AN AMBULANCE!! GET IT HERE NOW!
scurrying
scurrying
Rain
drip
drip
drip
THE WORLD WON'T END YET.
NO.




PIETÀ #3 -END-

*THEIR POSE AT THE END HERE IS REMINISCENT OF MICHELANGELO'S FINISHED PIETÀ SCULPTURE, FROM WHICH THE MANGA LIKELY TAKES ITS NAME